7

shiwo komeyama

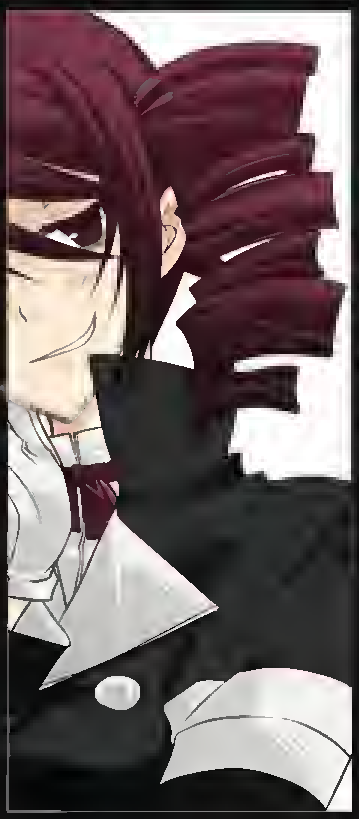
BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

Shiwo Komeyama

7

BLOODY CROSS



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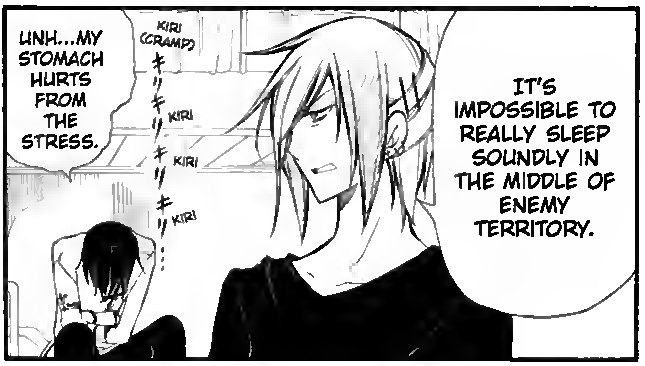
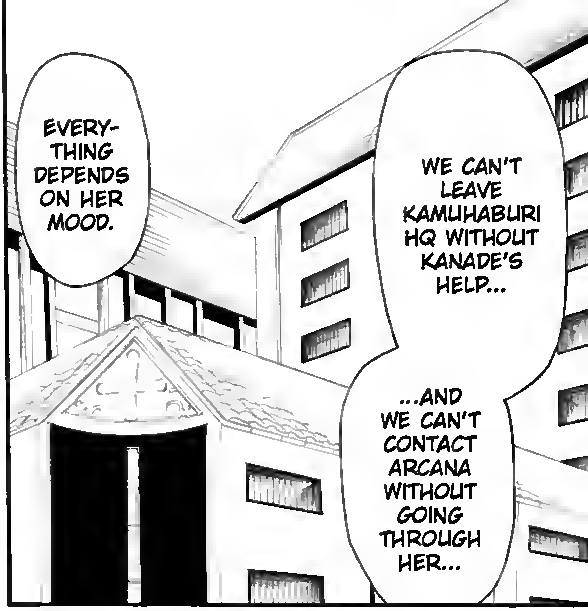
NNNH...

I DON'T FEEL LIKE I'VE SLEPT...

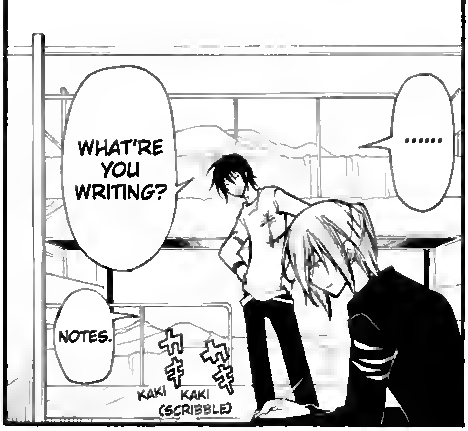

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO REALLY SLEEP SOUNDLY IN THE MIDDLE OF ENEMY TERRITORY.
KIRI (CRAMP)
キリキリキリキリ...
KIRI
KIRI
KIRI
UNH...MY STOMACH HURTS FROM THE STRESS.

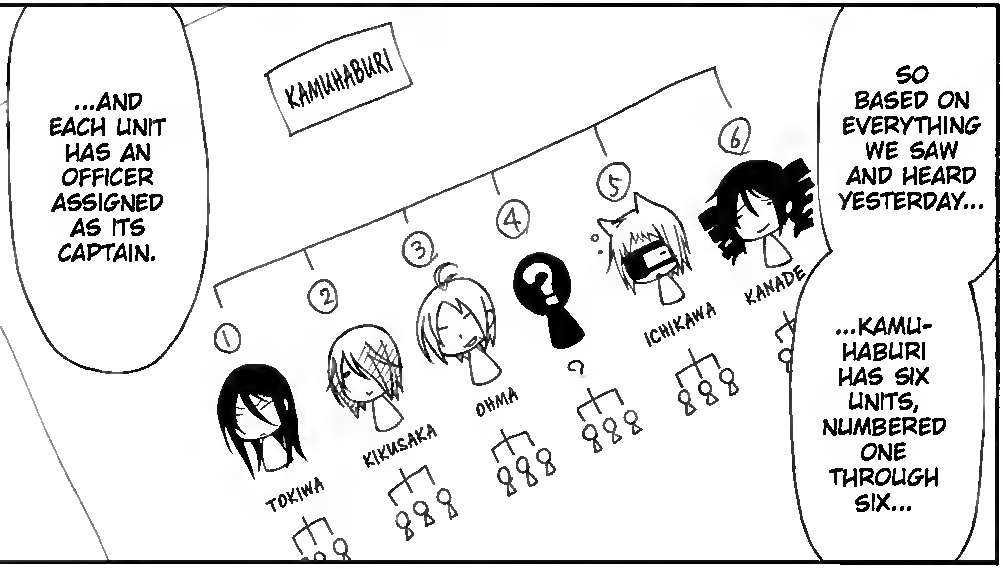
EVERY ASPECT OF THIS SUCKS...
THIS SITUATION IS ABSOLUTELY SHITTY.
KIRI
キリキリ...
KIRI


EVERY-THING DEPENDS ON HER MOOD.
WE CAN'T LEAVE KAMUHABURI HQ WITHOUT KANADE'S HELP...
...AND WE CAN'T CONTACT ARCANA WITHOUT GOING THROUGH HER...

Chapter 30
Silent Shadows

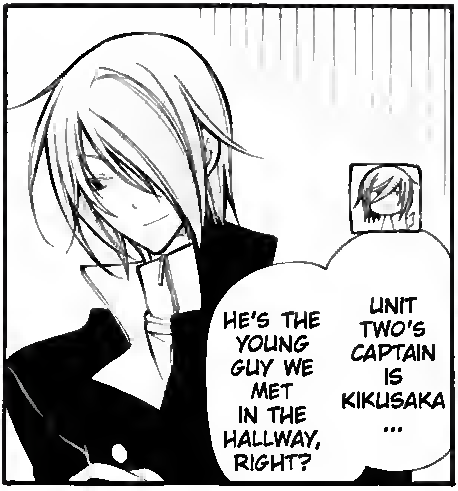
I THOUGHT I'D TRY TO WORK OUT...
...WHO'S DANGEROUS AND WHO MIGHT BE USABLE.


.....
WHAT'RE YOU WRITING?
NOTES.
KAKI KAKI (SCRIBBLE)


KAMUHABURI
...AND EACH UNIT HAS AN OFFICER ASSIGNED AS ITS CAPTAIN.
SO BASED ON EVERYTHING WE SAW AND HEARD YESTERDAY...
...KAMU-HABURI HAS SIX UNITS, NUMBERED ONE THROUGH SIX...
1
2
3
4
5
6
TOKIWA
KIKUSAKA
OHMA
?
ICHIKAWA
KANADE

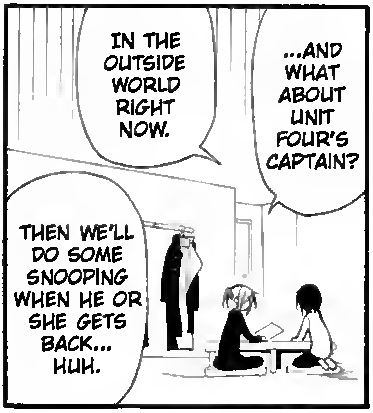
MM.
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE HAS TO GO THROUGH THEM.
ONLY OFFICERS CAN AUTHORIZE ENTERING AND LEAVING...
ICHIKAWA
THEIR HQ IS IN A DIMENSION DETACHED FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
ENTER AND LEAVE THROUGH ELEVATOR IN MULTI-TENANT BUILDING
ALTERNATE DIMENSION
KAMUHABURI STRONGHOLD
MAY BE OTHER ENTRANCES AND EXITS AS WELL

...THEN THERE'S HIM.
TON (TAP)
TOKIWA


UNIT TWO'S CAPTAIN IS KIKUSAKA ...
HE'S THE YOUNG GUY WE MET IN THE HALLWAY, RIGHT?

UNIT ONE CAPTAIN TOKIWA IS ALSO THE HEAD OF KAMU-HABURI.
I HEARD HE'S A FALLEN ANGEL.
...IT'D BE BETTER IF WE STEERED CLEAR OF HIM AS MUCH AS WE CAN.
HE'D KILL US
SO HE'S THE KAMU-HABURI WE NEED TO AVOID THE MOST... GOT IT.
MEMO (SCRIBBL)
MEMO

HE WIELDS WEAPON-TYPE DIVINE RELICS...
...AND NEITHER TSUKIMIYA NOR I COULD TOUCH HIM.
I SEE ...
BETTER AVOID TWO TOO... HUH.
NORMAL SPELLS ARE POW-ERLESS. AGAINST A DIVINE RELIC ...
ZA (CLASH)


...AND WHAT ABOUT UNIT FOUR'S CAPTAIN?
IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD RIGHT NOW.
THEN WE'LL DO SOME SNOOPING WHEN HE OR SHE GETS BACK... HUH.

UNIT THREE CAPTAIN OHMA...
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HIM, BUT HE AND KANADE SEEM TO BE ON BAD TERMS.
HE SEEMED LIKE AN IDIOT.
I THINK YOU'RE JUST INVITING HER TO MOCK YOUR INTELLI-GENCE
MY LEGS ARE SOOO TIRED. I THINK I'M GONNA REST HERE A BIT
HE SEEMS MORE APPROACH-ABLE THAN THE FIRST TWO...
...BUT WE KNOW WAY TOO LITTLE ABOUT HIM.

AND...
...UNIT SIX'S CAPTAIN IS KANADE.
A SELF-PROCLAIMED HEARTLESS, MASOCHIST TRAITOR...
THRILLING! ♡
TECHNICALLY OUR ONE AND ONLY ALLY... TECHNICALLY.
DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SHE WANTS TO COOPERATE.
KUNKA (SNUFFLE)
KUNKA
UNIT FIVE'S CAPTAIN IS ICHIKAWA... THE ONE WITH THE FURRY EARS, HUH.
HE ACTS LIKE HE'S ZONED OUT, BUT...
...HE'S GOT A SHARP NOSE, SO I'D RATHER AVOID HIM.
HE'LL SMELL IT'S ME
THE INTEL ARCANA WANTS US TO BRING BACK...
...IS WHERE KAMUHABURI IS KEEPING THE STOLEN DIVINE RELICS...
...AND WHERE TSUKIMIYA MIGHT BE BEING HELD CAPTIVE.
THAT SOUND ABOUT RIGHT?
SPEAKING OF, WE HAVEN'T TALKED ABOUT THAT YET
TSUKIMIYA, HUH...
FROM WHAT KANADE IMPLIED, IT SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S SOMEWHERE HERE.
BUT... TOKIWA'S KEEPING SUCH A CLOSE WATCH...
...IT'LL BE DIFFICULT TO MAKE CONTACT...
KON (KNOCK)
KON
IT'S KANADE.
COULD YOU PLEASE LET ME IN?

HAAH...
IT'S SUCH A PAIN, HAVING TO DO THAT EVERY TIME.
GACHA GACHAIO

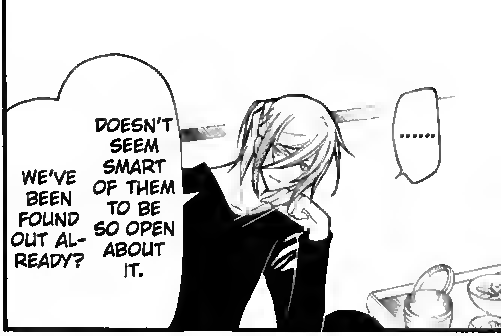
RE-SCIND BLOCK-ADE!
→O.M.←

PAKI (SNAP)

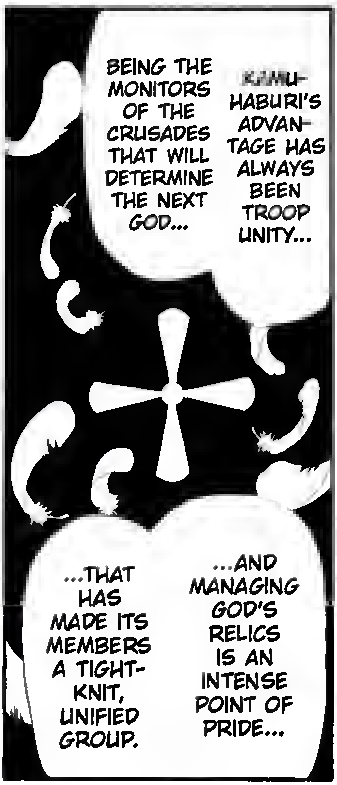
I BROUGHT YOU YOUR BREAK-FAST.
SINCE YOU CAN'T EAT WITH YOUR MASKS OFF IN THE DINING HALL...
...I'LL HAVE YOU TAKE YOUR MEALS IN EITHER THIS ROOM OR MY OFFICE.
STARTING NEXT TIME, YOU CAN FETCH YOUR OWN TAKE-OUT, OKAY?
HUP!

REMEMBER I TOLD YOU THAT TOKIWA WAS INFORMED OF THE PRESENCE OF ARCANA SPIES LAST NIGHT?
ZUZU (SLURP)
I LOVE SOCKEYE SALMON
I HAVE AN INTERESTING BIT OF NEWS TO REPORT.
OH! THAT'S RIGHT ...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
THERE'S BEEN A DEVELOP-MENT.
MM! MM!
THEY'VE LAUNCHED ...
...QUITE THE EXTENSIVE SPY HUNT STARTING THIS MORNING. ♡
KYUN (SWOOND) KYUN
きゅん
きゅん
MY HEART WON'T STOP RACING.
HEE-HEE...♡ THE ATMO-SPHERE OF THE WHOLE ESTATE HAS A NEW LAYER OF TENSION.
BUHO (SPURT)
!!! IE
PORO (PLOP)

THOUGH THINGS HAVE BECOME NEEDLESSLY MESSIER THANKS TO ARCANA'S PERSISTENT MEDDLING.
OH...
IT'S NOT PARTICULARLY PROBLEMATIC, YOU KNOW.


WE'VE BEEN FOUND OUT ALREADY?
DOESN'T SEEM SMART OF THEM TO BE SO OPEN ABOUT IT.
.....

...THAT THERE ARE SPIES INSIDE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
PAKU CMNCHO
...I'M THE ONE WHO LEAKED...


BEING THE MONITORS OF THE CRUSADES THAT WILL DETERMINE THE NEXT GOD...
KAMU-HABURI'S ADVANTAGE HAS ALWAYS BEEN TROOP UNITY...
...THAT HAS MADE ITS MEMBERS A TIGHT-KNIT, UNIFIED GROUP.
...AND MANAGING GOD'S RELICS IS AN INTENSE POINT OF PRIDE...

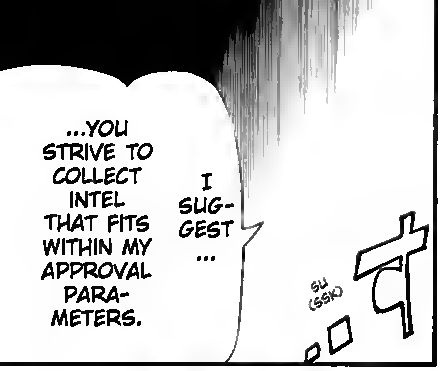
THIS IS MY ROLE TO PLAY.
...OH MY, NO ONE'S TOLD YOU, HAVE THEY?
...!?
HUNH ...!?

I...
...AM WORKING TO CAUSE KAMU-HABURI TO IMPLODE.
IT'S PART OF MY DEAL WITH IZUMI FROM ARCANA.

...WOULDN'T IT BE UNSPEAK-ABLY AMUSING?
STIMU-LATING! ♡
...GOING UP IN FLAMES...
ALL THAT ...

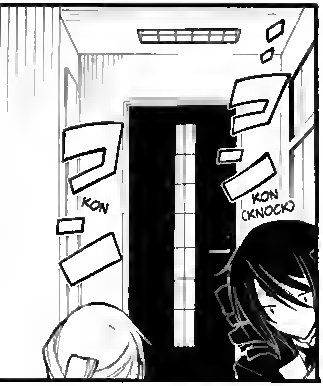
OH MY... HOW KIND OF YOU TO BE CON-CERNED.
I'VE SEVERAL ESCAPE PLANS IN PLACE. JUST IN CASE.
BUT I SHALL BE QUITE ALL RIGHT.
SHE'S SICK IN THE HEAD ...
YOU'LL BE KILLED...
...IF YOU'RE EXPOSED AS SPIES.
TO CTUD
...SO IT'D BE BEST FOR THE TWO OF YOU TO COMPLETE YOUR JOBS QUICKLY AND GO HOME.
AREN'T YOU UNDER SOME SUSPICION TOO?
...YOU THINK IT'S GONNA BE THAT EASY?

...INCLUDES SELLING OUT THE TWO OF US AS SPIES.
I'LL BET ONE OF THOSE ESCAPE PLANS...
.....
I'LL PASS IT ON!
PON (TAP)
HUH!? IT'S A RELAY SYSTEM !?
YOU MAY RELAY YOUR MESSAGE TO ME!
CERTAINLY. I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.
...AND REPORT IN?
...FOR ME TO CONTACT ARCANA ...
... HEY ... WOULD IT BE OKAY ...
QUESTION!
UM...
...UH...
YOU'RE A FOOL
I'M NOT GOING TO PASS ALONG SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE CONTACT, FIND OUT SOMETHING WORTH REPORTING ABOUT THE RELICS.
NO GO.
TCH
ZUBA (CLASH)
...I WANT TO TELL THEM THAT YOU HAVE NO APPARENT INTENTION OF HELPING US.


...YOU STRIVE TO COLLECT INTEL THAT FITS WITHIN MY APPROVAL PARA-METERS.
I SUG-GEST ...
SU (SSH)

...I WOULDN'T SHARE ANY INFO THAT MIGHT BE DAMAGING TO ME.
HEE-HEE AWW, YOU OUGHT TO BE ANGRIER THAN THAT.
PESHI (WHAP)
PESHI
AL-THOUGH ...
...EVEN IF YOU HAD RELIC INTEL...

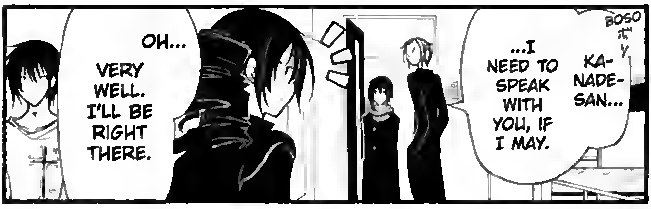
ONLY THEN WILL I USE THIS EXTERNAL COMMUNI-CATOR THAT ONLY KAMU-HABURI OFFICERS CARRY...
...THIS AMANE...


KON
KON (KNOCK)

...TO RELAY WHATEVER YOU'VE FOUND TO ARCANA.
ON/OFF

I HEARD THAT KANADE-SAN WAS HERE...
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
MPH
BOSO (MUMBLE)
...
HELLO.

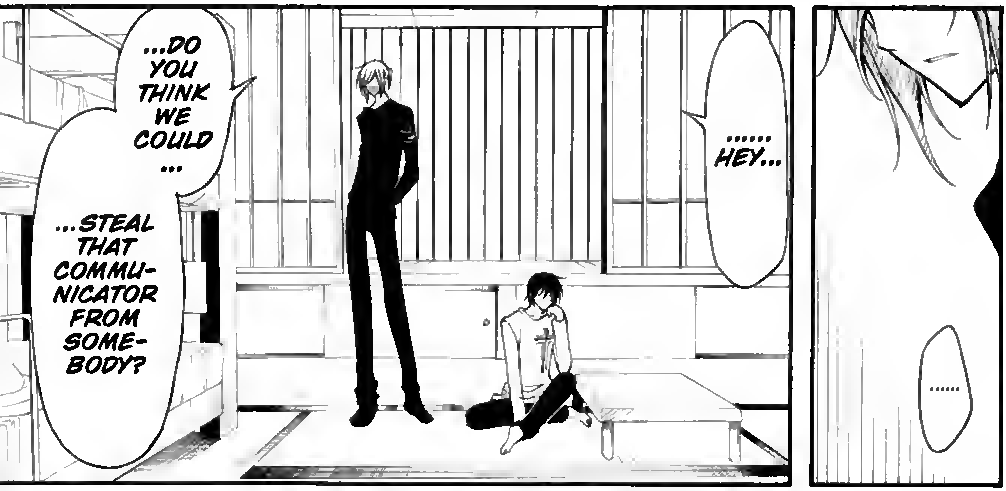
GACHA (KACHAK)
YES ...?
WHOA, YOU'RE SHORT!
GAN (SHOCK)

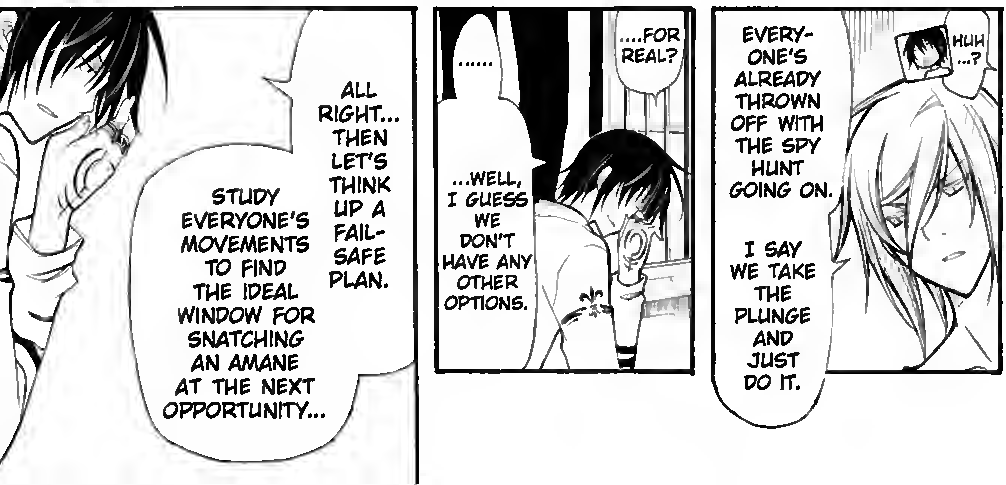

OH... VERY WELL. I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
...I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU, IF I MAY.
BOSO
KA-NADE-SAN...

HE REPORTS DIRECTLY TO TOKIWA.
HIS NAME IS "SETSU."
THAT IS THE INTERNAL INVESTI-GATOR.

BE ESPECIALLY CAUTIOUS WITH HIM.
IF HE CATCHES WIND OF YOUR SPY ACTIVITIES, YOU ARE FINISHED.

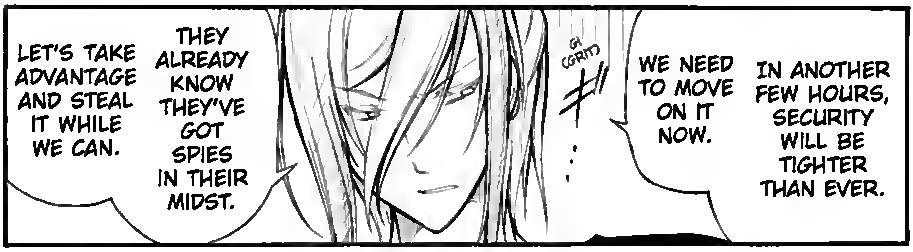
WE CAN'T MAKE ANY KIND OF CONTACT LIKE THIS.
DAM-MIT... THAT BITCH...
.....
EVIL WITCH
...SHE COULD MAKE OUT LIKE SHE FIGURED IT OUT HERSELF.
...I MEAN, EVEN IF WE MANAGE TO COLLECT INFO...


...DO YOU THINK WE COULD ...
...STEAL THAT COMMU-NICATOR FROM SOME-BODY?
.....
HEY...
.....


ALL RIGHT... THEN LET'S THINK UP A FAIL-SAFE PLAN.
STUDY EVERYONE'S MOVEMENTS TO FIND THE IDEAL WINDOW FOR SNATCHING AN AMANE AT THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY...
.....
...WELL, I GUESS WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS.
....FOR REAL?
EVERY-ONE'S ALREADY THROWN OFF WITH THE SPY HUNT GOING ON.
I SAY WE TAKE THE PLUNGE AND JUST DO IT.
HUH ...?

.....
.....
WHAT ...?

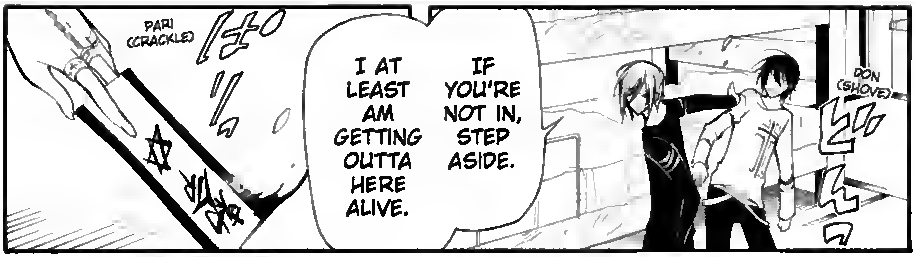
THAT'LL TAKE TOO LONG.


LET'S TAKE ADVANTAGE AND STEAL IT WHILE WE CAN.
THEY ALREADY KNOW THEY'VE GOT SPIES IN THEIR MIDST.
GRITD
WE NEED TO MOVE ON IT NOW.
IN ANOTHER FEW HOURS, SECURITY WILL BE TIGHTER THAN EVER.

HA... AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE WE DO THAT...
...WHEN WE'RE BARELY GETTING BY, HIDING BEHIND A COUPLE OF MASKS?
WE NEED TO PROCEED WITH CAUTION!
WE ARE THE SPIES BEING HUNTED, GET IT? WE'D JUST BE MAKING OUR SITUATION WORSE!

...NH.
...
"TAKING ADVAN-TAGE"...
...WOULD BE OUTSIDERS WHO WERE BEYOND SUSPICION MAKING IT LOOK LIKE THE SPIES DID IT.

GGH ...
... DOESN'T SEEM INCLINED TO BE OF ANY HELP TO US AT ALL?
WHEN KANADE, WHO WAS SUP-POSED TO SUP-PORT US...

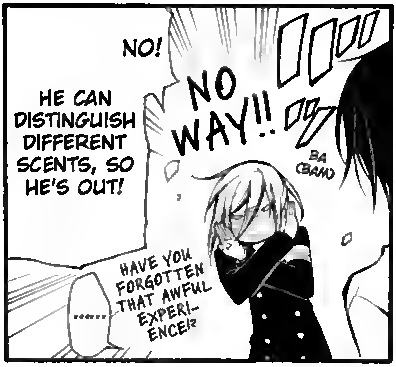


TAG: IMPERIAL EDICT

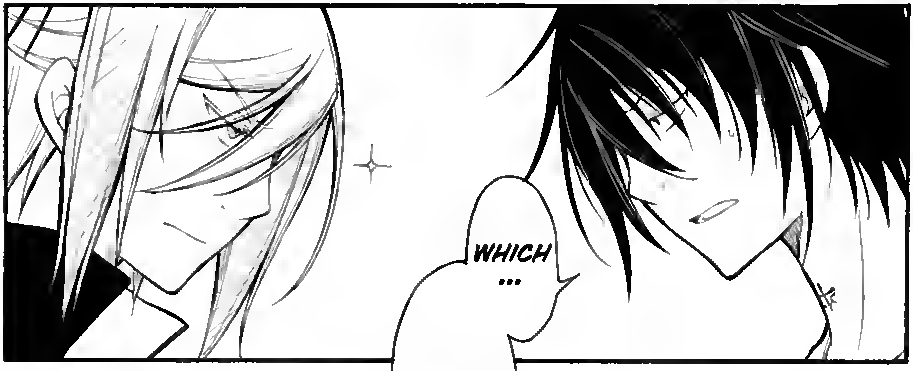
GACHA (KACHA)
HEY ...!!
... YOU ...
...LIS-TEN TO ME!!
DOO (WHAM)
OH!
THE TWO (SUS-PECTED) NEWBIES!
PITA (FREEZE)
... WHAT THE HELL?
BUCHI (SNAP)
DOKA (THOK)
TEKU (TAP)
TEKU
AHH ...
GESH! (BOOT)
I'M HUNGRY. I WONDER WHAT'S FOR BREAK.
BASHI (WHAP)

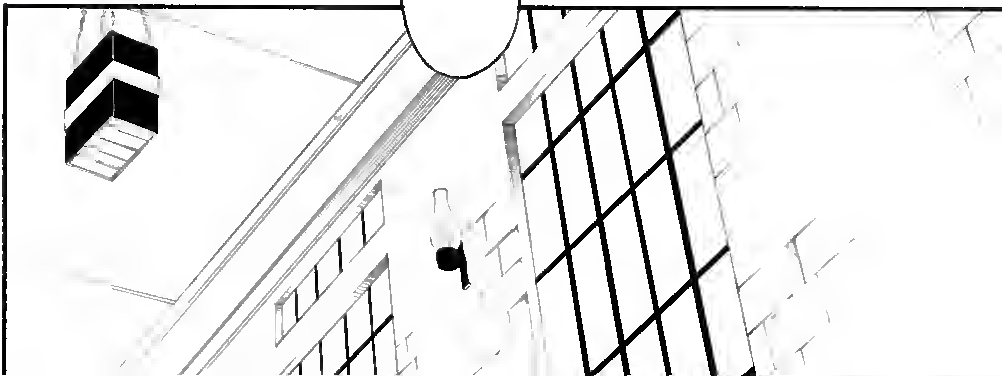
NO, NOT KIKU-SAKA!
I TOLD YOU HE WAS BAD NEWS, REMEMBER!?
BA CHANK
WHAT !?
THEY REALLY ARE CLOSE
.....!
WELL... NOT THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING EITHER...
THAT'S WHY I'D RATHER HAMMER OUT A PLAN FIRST.
HAAH...
...BUT I WANNA LIVE AND GET OUTTA HERE TOO.
I GET THAT YOU'RE 100% COMMITTED AND MOTIVATED...
I SAY WE TAKE OUR TIME.
DON'T RANDOMLY PICK A TARGET OUT OF DESPERATION.
IT'S UNSAFE OUT HERE
LET'S GO BACK TO OUR ROOM TO START
I'D RATHER NOT, BUT...
COLLABO-RATION IS KEY.
ESPECIALLY GIVEN OUR CIRCUM-STANCES
KI (GLARE)
SO...
...WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

ICHIKAWA'S ALWAYS ZONING OUT, SO HE MIGHT BE SAFE... RIGHT?
WELL?
SO... HMM...
(GO CLONE) !!!


NO!
HE CAN DISTINGUISH DIFFERENT SCENTS, SO HE'S OUT!
NO WAY!!
BA (BAM)
..... HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT AWFUL EXPERI-ENCE?

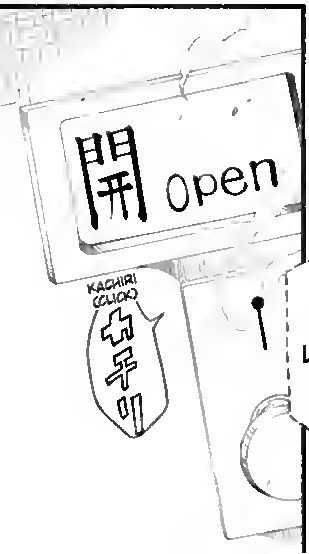
KIKUSAKA ALSO SEEMS SHORT-TEMPERED, SO HE'S NO GOOD.
TOKIWA WOULD BE THE WORST ONE TO TARGET...
IF WE'RE FOUND OUT AND IT TURNED INTO A FIGHT, WE'D HAVE NO CHANCE.
PATAN (KLOMP)

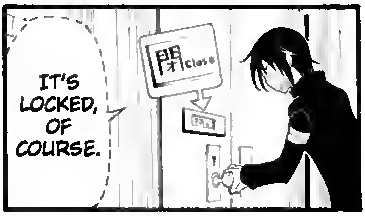

WHICH ...
... LEAVES .....

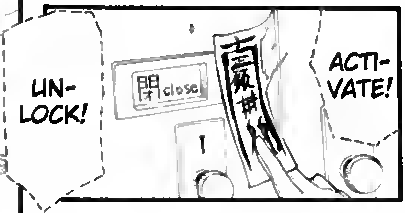


SIGN: UNIT THREE OFFICE

MISO SOUP WITH SCALLIONS IS GOOD FOR COLDS.
BLECH, I'D RATHER HAVE SAKE WITH EGG.
ALCOHOL
YOU AREN'T REMORSEFUL AT ALL, ARE YOU.
HE SEEMS PRETTY DUMB, SO LET'S GO WITH HIM.



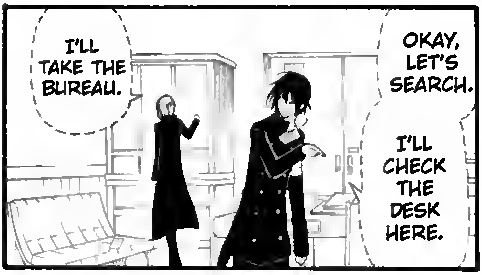


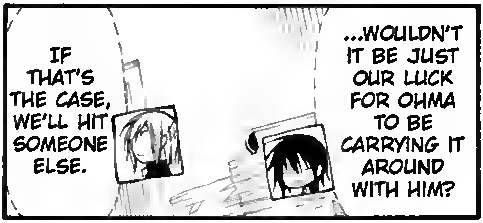


PHEW ...

...DID YOU...
...HEAR A NOISE COMING FROM MY ROOM?
WHAT'S WRONG?
HUH? NO...?

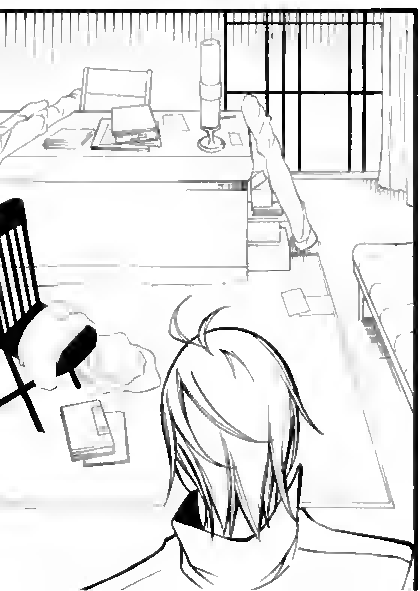
PATAN (SHUT)


I'LL TAKE THE BUREAU.
OKAY, LET'S SEARCH.
I'LL CHECK THE DESK HERE.


IF THAT'S THE CASE, WE'LL HIT SOMEONE ELSE.
...WOULDN'T IT BE JUST OUR LUCK FOR OHMA TO BE CARRYING IT AROUND WITH HIM?

.....
IS MY COLD MAKING ME HEAR THINGS?

GACHA (KACHAK)
GACHA
HM?
HUH... THE DOOR'S UN-LOCKED.
GEH!
!?
HE CAME BACK !?
NO WAY!



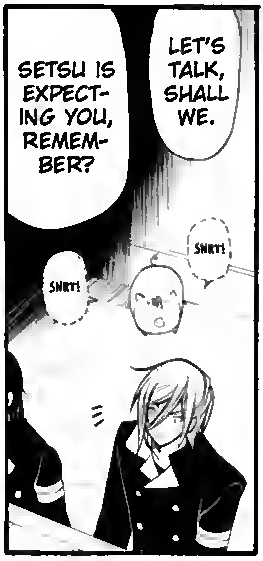
BAN (WHAM)
HIDE!
NH... SHOOT!
SOME-THING... FEELS OFF.

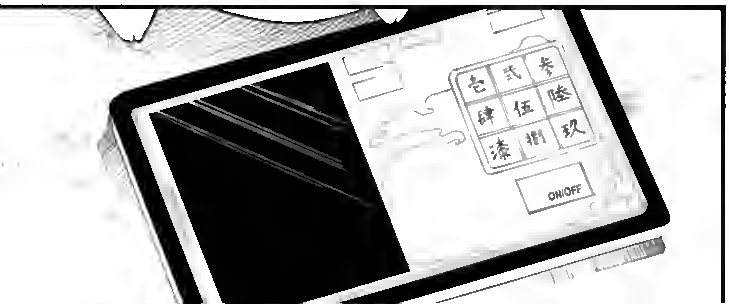
WHAT IS IT YOU IMAGINED?
OH?
DID I IMAGINE IT?
.....
I WAS MERELY ASKED TO SUMMON THE TARDY.
SUCH A BOTHER REALLY
HOW RARE...
UNIT SIX'S CHARMING CAPTAIN, VISITING ME IN MY OFFICE.
STU-PID!
HIDE, QUICK!
... HN...
NO, I FILE IMPORT-ANT ONES AWAY PROPER-LY.
HOW RUDE.
THE ONES THERE ARE TRASH
...BUT WHAT A MESSY ROOM.
NO SURPRISE
YOU LEAVE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS ON THE FLOOR TOO, DO YOU?
...IN THE INTERNAL INVESTI-GATION.
YOU'RE THE LAST THEY NEED TO INTERRO-GATE ...
SETSU IS ANGRY THAT YOU DIDN'T SHOW UP AT THE APPOINTED TIME.
SUPER-BAD
THIS IS BAD
BAD

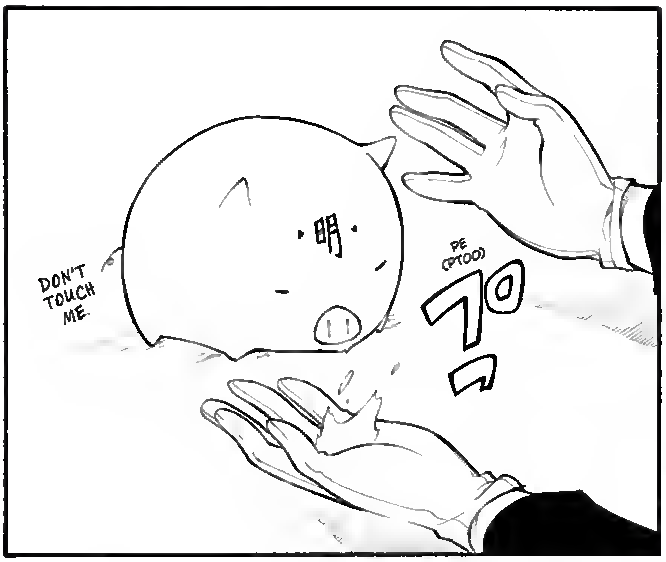
第参番隊 執務室
NIYA (SMIRK)
NIYA
MAYBE YOU'RE THE TRAITOR SPY?
HOW SUSPICIOUS.
ORO (PANIC) ORO
I WAS RUNNING AN ERRAND FOR TOKIWA-SAN AT THE TIME.
MY, MY... THAT WAS UNFORTUNATE.
OH...
THAT REMINDS ME...
...WEREN'T YOU JUST COMING IN FROM OUTSIDE WHEN THAT ARCANA GUY TRIED TO GET IN?

SIGN. UNIT THREE OFFICE

HA HA HA. WHAT A FALSE ACCUSATION!
BISHI (CRACKLE)
...YOU MIGHT HAVE ARRANGED THAT, SINCE YOU DON'T LIKE ME.
...ACTUALLY, I JUST REPORTED TO SETSU THAT I SUSPECT...

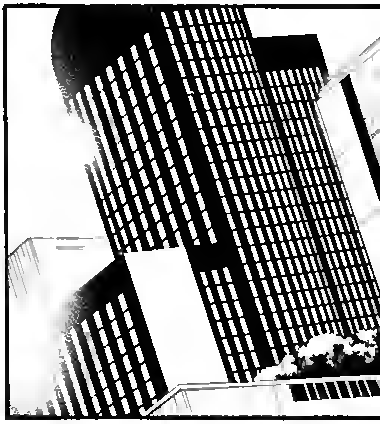





DON'T TOUCH ME.
PE (PTOO)

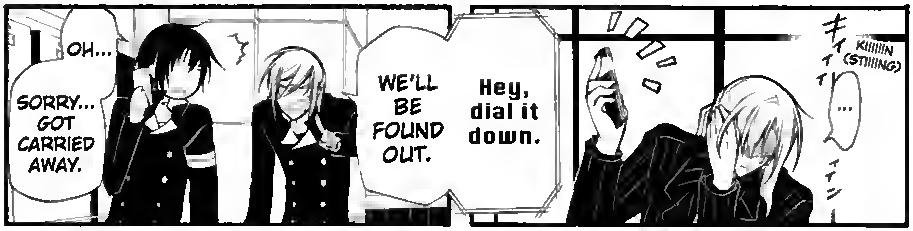
!!
NICE GOING, PIG!!
AH... AHHH ...!!
A GOOD BOY?
WHO'S
BA (OOMO)

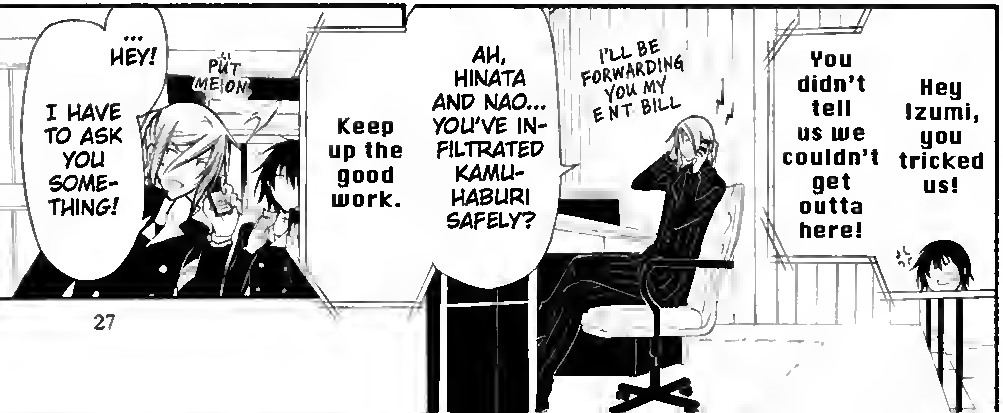
?
?
LET'S GET OVER THERE ASAP
FUKI (WIPE)
FUKI
HE'S PROBABLY SUPER PISSED OFF.
AHH, RIGHT... SETSU... I'D FORGOTTEN.



...UN-KNOWN NUM-BER.
PLLL
PLL
...PLLL

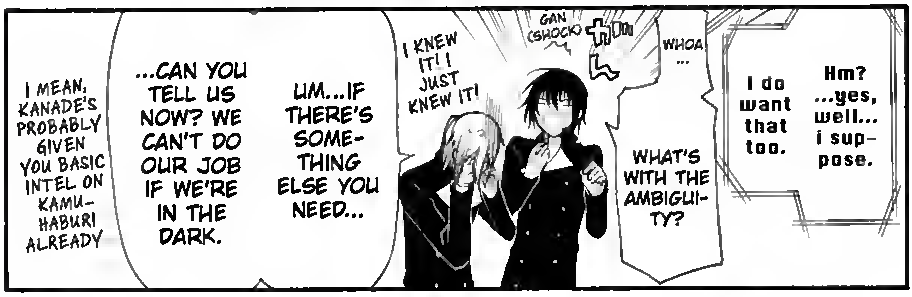
Yes!! It went through!!
Whoo-oooo-oooo-ooo!!
(PI (PIP)
YES ?
.....

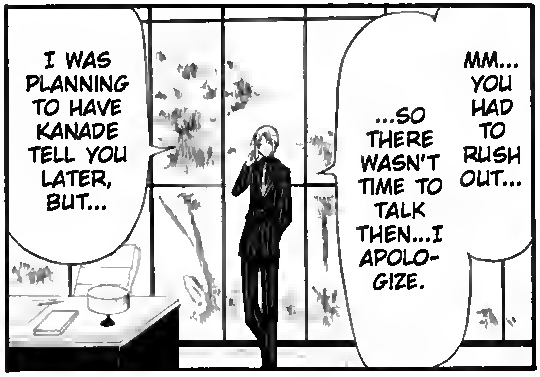

OH...
SORRY... GOT CARRIED AWAY.
WE'LL BE FOUND OUT.
Hey, dial it down.
KIIIIIIN (STIIIING)
...


...HEY!
I HAVE TO ASK YOU SOME-THING!
PUT ME ON
Keep up the good work.
AH, HINATA AND NAO... YOU'VE IN-FILTRATED KAMU-HABURI SAFELY?
I'LL BE FORWARDING YOU MY ENT BILL
You didn't tell us we couldn't get outta here!
Hey Izumi, you tricked us!

...IS INFO ABOUT THE RELICS STOLEN FROM ARCANA... RIGHT?
AND THE INTEL YOU WANT...

AFTER THIS JOB...YOU'LL UNDO MY MIXED-RACE CURSE...
...IN EXCHANGE FOR INTEL ON KAMU-HABURI, RIGHT? THAT'S OUR AGREE-MENT?
What is it?

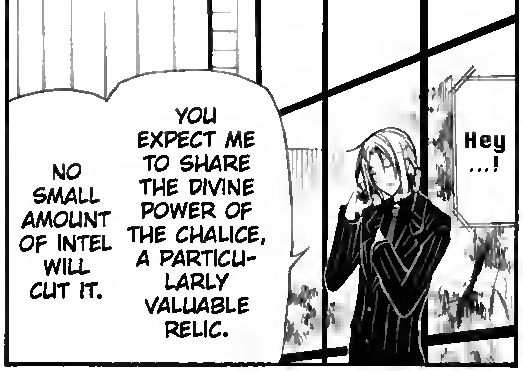

I MEAN, KANADE'S PROBABLY GIVEN YOU BASIC INTEL ON KAMU-HABURI ALREADY
...CAN YOU TELL US NOW? WE CAN'T DO OUR JOB IF WE'RE IN THE DARK.
UM...IF THERE'S SOME-THING ELSE YOU NEED...
I KNEW IT! I JUST KNEW IT!
GAN (SHOCK)
WHOA...
WHAT'S WITH THE AMBIGUI-TY?
I do want that too.
Hm? ...yes, well... i sup-pose.

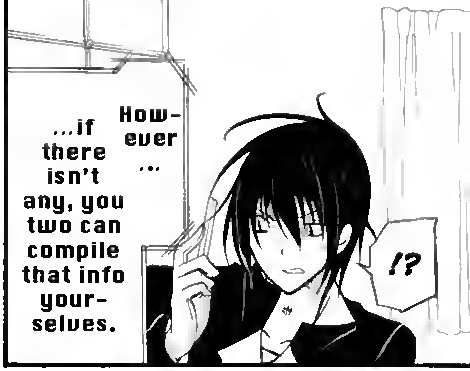

I WAS PLANNING TO HAVE KANADE TELL YOU LATER, BUT...
...SO THERE WASN'T TIME TO TALK THEN...I APOLO-GIZE.
MM... YOU HAD TO RUSH OUT...

I DON'T WANT TO COME BACK AND HEAR...
..."THIS ISN'T ENOUGH," OR, "I CAN'T UNDO THE CURSE"!!
MY LIFE IS RIDING ON THIS!!

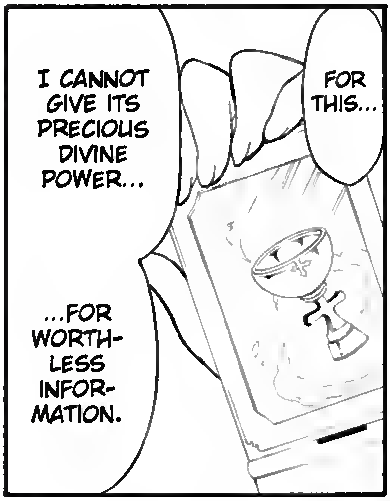
I CAN CLARIFY EVERY-THING FOR YOU NOW.
... VERY WELL.

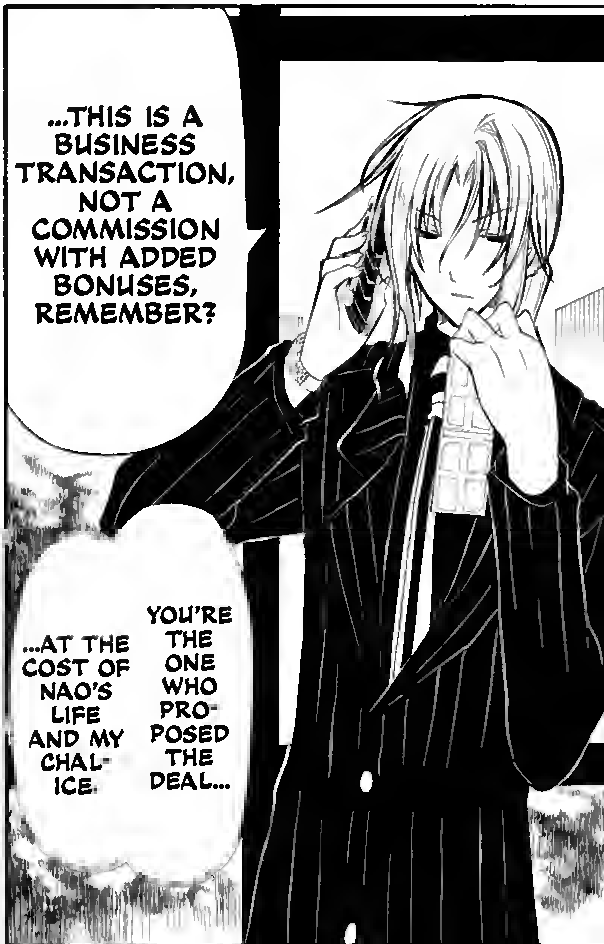
I WANT YOU TWO TO BRING BACK COMPLETE DETAILS...
...ON ALL OF THE DIVINE RELICS IN KAMU-HABURI'S POSSES-SION.
ALL OF THEM.
I want everything you can find about all the Relics they've collected.
That's what I'm after.
... WHA ...?
...ALL OF THEM !?
BA (SNATCH)
NOT JUST THE ONES STOLEN FROM ARCANA!?
That's right. For retri-bution.
DOUBLE RETALIATION
HAAH ...
YOU COULDN'T ASK FOR SOMETHING MORE DIFFICULT...
SO ...
...ARE WE TALKING DATA FILES? DOCU-MENTS?
No clue.
Huh?
SORRY, BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT DATA AND DOCUMENTA-TION THERE MIGHT BE.

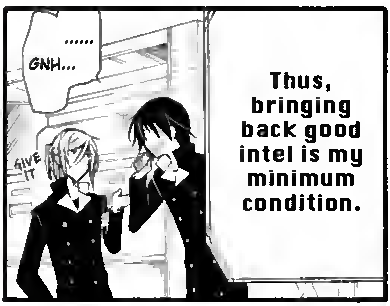

Hey ...!
YOU EXPECT ME TO SHARE THE DIVINE POWER OF THE CHALICE, A PARTICULARLY VALUABLE RELIC.
NO SMALL AMOUNT OF INTEL WILL CUT IT.


!?
However ...
...if there isn't any, you two can compile that info yourselves.

.....
For a fair trade...
...it needs to be of equivalent value.


FOR THIS...
I CANNOT GIVE ITS PRECIOUS DIVINE POWER...
...FOR WORTHLESS INFORMATION.


...THIS IS A BUSINESS TRANSACTION, NOT A COMMISSION WITH ADDED BONUSES, REMEMBER?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO PROPOSED THE DEAL...
...AT THE COST OF NAO'S LIFE AND MY CHALICE.


Thus, bringing back good intel is my minimum condition.
GNH...
.....
GIVE IT

Bring anything else that might be beneficial as well.
I'll buy it at an appropriate price.
.....THAT GUY...
HE TOLD TSUZUKI HE'D HELP TSUKIMIYA...
...BUT HE MADE NO MENTION OF THAT.
BUT THAT'S EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO ME...
I'LL BRING TSUKIMIYA SAFELY BACK TO TSUZUKI FIRST.
THEN I'LL MAKE IZUMI REVEAL THE CHALICE UNDER THE PRETEXT OF UNDOING NAO'S CURSE...
...SO THAT I CAN STEAL IT.
I'LL...
...GET BOTH.

SO HERE YOU ARE.
OH!
カリカチャ
GACHA GACHAKO

WHY ARE YOU SNEAKING AROUND? KEEPING SECRETS?
... STRATEGY MEETING!
.....
JUST THE TWO OF US!

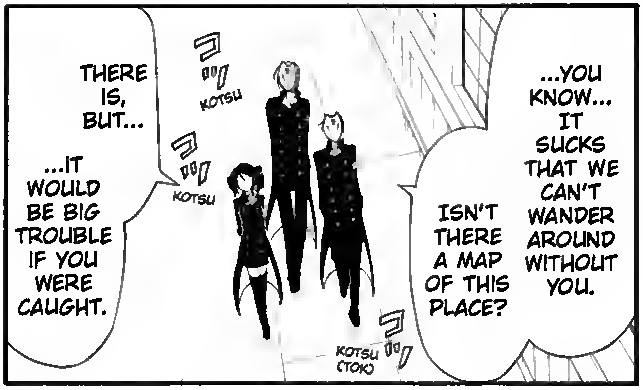
GEH ...!
SA (SWFF)

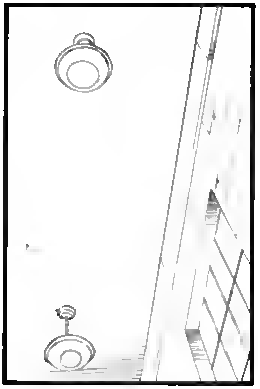
BE QUICK IF YOU WANT TO COME.
I CAN PROB-ABLY SHOW YOU AROUND.
JUST NOW... THEY'RE SHORT ON GUARDS IN THE INNER PRE-CINCTS.

... HMM.
I SUP-POSE THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

I'LL SHUT IT OFF, JUST IN CASE...
SU (GSK)

...YEAH.
SURE.
KACHI (CLICK)
POWER OFF


...YOU KNOW... IT SUCKS THAT WE CAN'T WANDER AROUND WITHOUT YOU.
ISN'T THERE A MAP OF THIS PLACE?
THERE IS, BUT...
...IT WOULD BE BIG TROUBLE IF YOU WERE CAUGHT.
KOTSU
KOTSU
KOTSU (TOK)



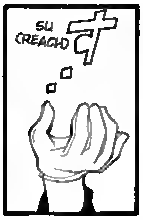
...BITCH.
KA-NADE.

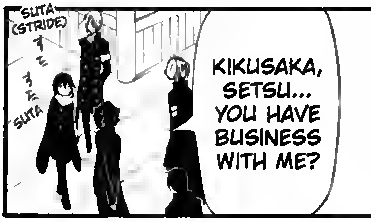
...I MIGHT HAVE TO EXPOSE THE TWO OF YOU TO MAKE MY ESCAPE.
AT THAT POINT, YOU WOULD BE FREE TO EXPLORE ON YOUR OWN.
HEE HEE.
THOUGH ...IF THINGS START GOING SOUTH...

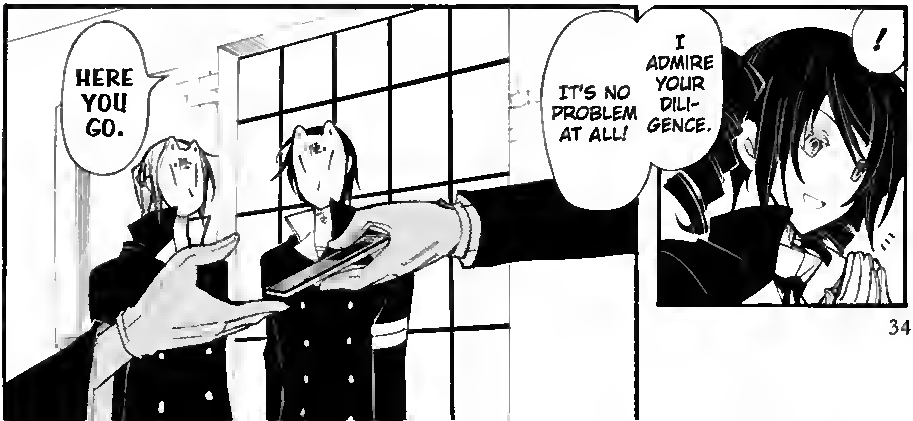
YO!
HAVE A MINUTE?
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.

PLEASE LOAN US YOUR AMANE FOR A SHORT TIME.
BOSO (MUMBLE)
WE'RE CHECKING EACH OFFICER'S EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION HISTORY.

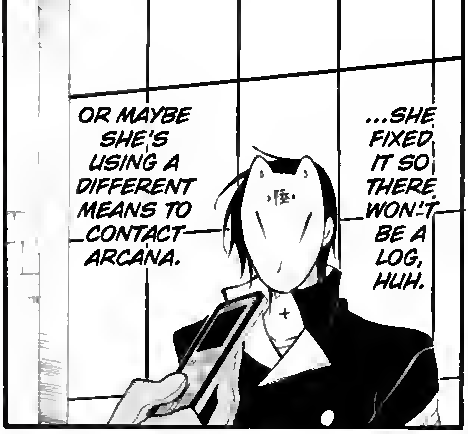
DID THEY OVERHEAR OUR CONVERSATION?
I DIDN'T SENSE THEM
KURURI (TURN)
.....
OH?

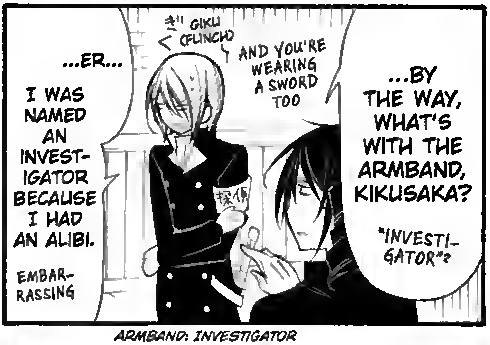

SU (REACH)


SUTA (STRIDE)
SUTA
KIKUSAKA, SETSU... YOU HAVE BUSINESS WITH ME?

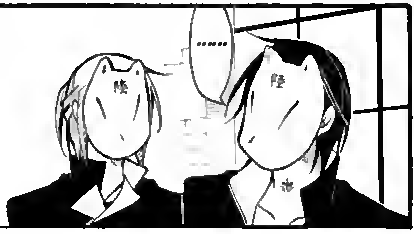

HERE YOU GO.
IT'S NO PROBLEM AT ALL!
I ADMIRE YOUR DILIGENCE.
!

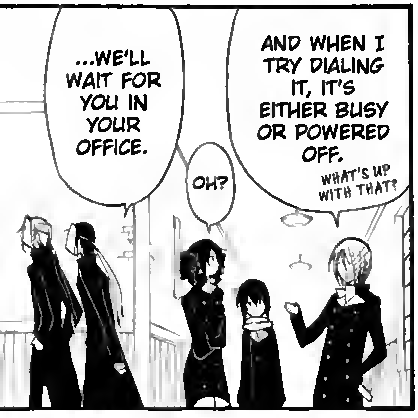
THANK YOU. WE'LL RETURN IT RIGHT AWAY.
PEKORI (BOW)
SURE.
...SINCE HE ISN'T ASKING ANY QUESTIONS...
...HE MUST NOT HAVE OVERHEARD OUR CONVERSATION.
PHEW!

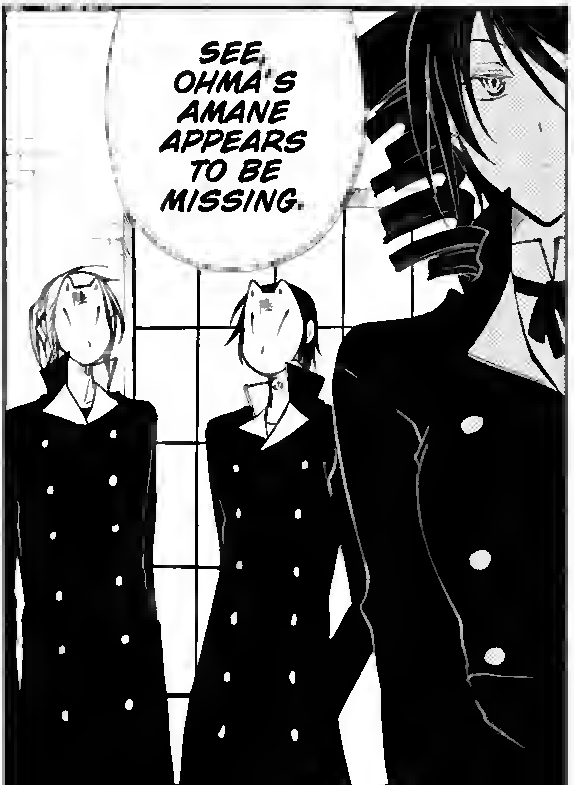



...BY THE WAY, WHAT'S WITH THE ARMBAND, KIKUSAKA?
"INVESTIGATOR"?
GIKU (FLINCH)
AND YOU'RE WEARING A SWORD TOO
...ER...
I WAS NAMED AN INVESTIGATOR BECAUSE I HAD AN ALIBI.
EMBARRASSING

ARMBAND: INVESTIGATOR

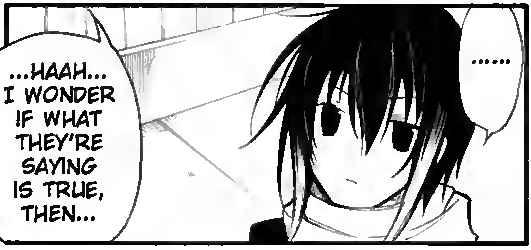






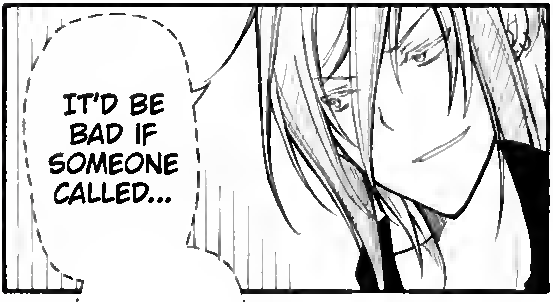
THAT WE HAVE SPIES IN OUR MIDST.

SO WE HAVE NO WAY TO LOOK FOR IT.
HM? YEAH.
...ITS POWER HAS BEEN TURNED OFF?


...HAAH... I WONDER IF WHAT THEY'RE SAYING IS TRUE, THEN...
.....

THESE UNITS WORK BOTH WAYS.
I MEAN, IT WAS A NO-BRAINER.
WHEN ...?
BUT WHEN DID YOU MANAGE TO TURN IT OFF?

TCH ...
THEY ALREADY KNOW ABOUT OHMA'S COMMUNICATOR.
I GUESS THEY'RE REALLY ON TOP OF THAT STUFF.

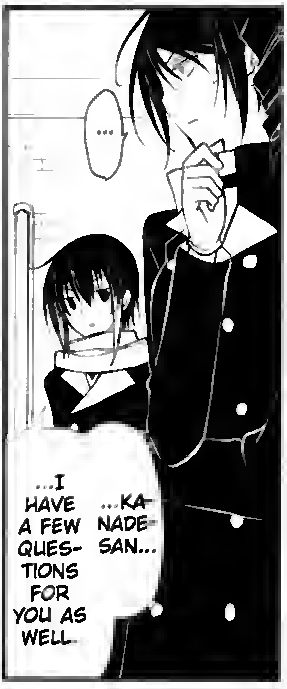

IT'D BE BAD IF SOMEONE CALLED...

...RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE INVESTIGATION.

HUH?
ピピ！
PIP!!!!!
ピピピ！！
PIP!!!!!
(BEEEP)
イイ…!!!!!
BUTSU
(BZP)
FORCED CALL
PASS ****
STOP
……JUST NOW… I USED MY AUTHORITY AS INSPECTOR …
…TO OVERRIDE THE SYSTEM AND FORCE A CALL TO OHMA-SAN'S AMANE.

WE'VE ...
...FOUND HIS AMANE.
AND RATHER NEAR AT HAND.
TON (THMP)
DA (DASH)
.....TCH!
DON'T STOP! JUST RUN!
HEY. HOLD ON THERE.
I'VE GOT A FEW...
...QUES-TIONS.

THEY ARE OF UNIT SIX... YOUR SUBORDINATES, YES?
WHY DO THEY POSSESS AN OFFICER'S AMANE ...?
ESPECIALLY THAT OF AN OFFICER FROM ANOTHER UNIT?


...KANADE-SAN...
...I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU AS WELL.

SU (SHA?)
BY THE WAY, I RECOMMEND YOU CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY.
MY ORDERS ...
...ARE TO PRESENT TRAITORS DEAD.

...MY, MY...
...HOW DISTRESSING.

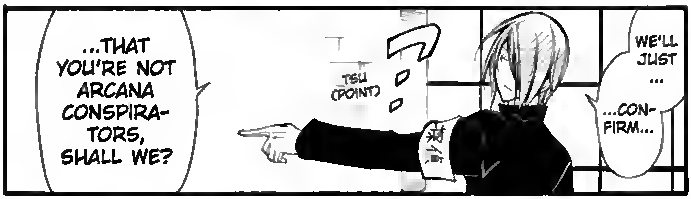
AS FOR ME...

HOWEVER...
...I THINK YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKEN ASSUMPTION.
THIS IS BAD, BAD, BUT.
DAMMIT, KANADE ...YOU!
WHERE'S THE TIMELY HELP WHEN A GUY NEEDS IT?

I'M JUST AS DISGUSTED TO LEARN THAT THIS RIFFRAFF WAS IN UNIT SIX.
THAT BITCH...! UNH!

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO INTERROGATE THEM...
...TO THE FULL EXTENT OF YOUR SATISFACTION.
SHE REALLY DID SELL US OUT!

...WHETHER THOSE TWO ARE SPIES OR THIEVES, I AM COMPLETELY INNOCENT...
...AND HAVE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THEIR ACTIVITIES.


...THAT YOU'RE NOT ARCANA CONSPIRATORS, SHALL WE?
TSU (POINT)
WE'LL JUST ...
...CONFIRM...

BUT WE'D BETTER MAKE SURE WE'RE NOT JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS.
...SO SHE SAYS.

SOME WAY OUT OF THIS...!!
DAMMIT ...!
C'MON, THINK .....!!

THINK ...

HOW THE HELL DO WE —
IN ANY CASE...
...THESE MASKS ARE JUST IN THE WAY...
YOU MIND TAKING THEM OFF?

BLOODY CROSS

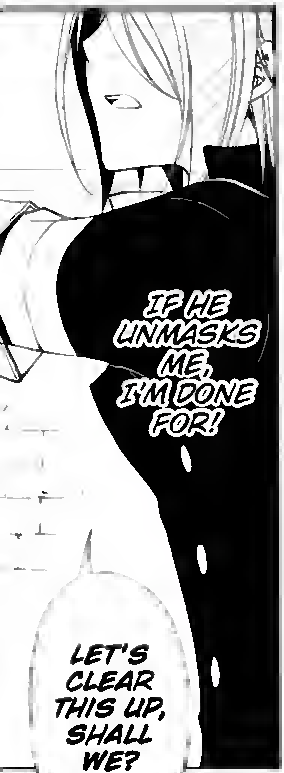
SAWA
SAWA (RUSTLE)
AHHH...
HOW PEACE-FUL.
GETTING AWAY FROM THE CITY FOR A LITTLE REST AND RELAX-ATION WAS A FINE IDEA.
YUP.
IT'S INCREDIBLE TO FEEL THIS SENSE OF LIBERA-TION.

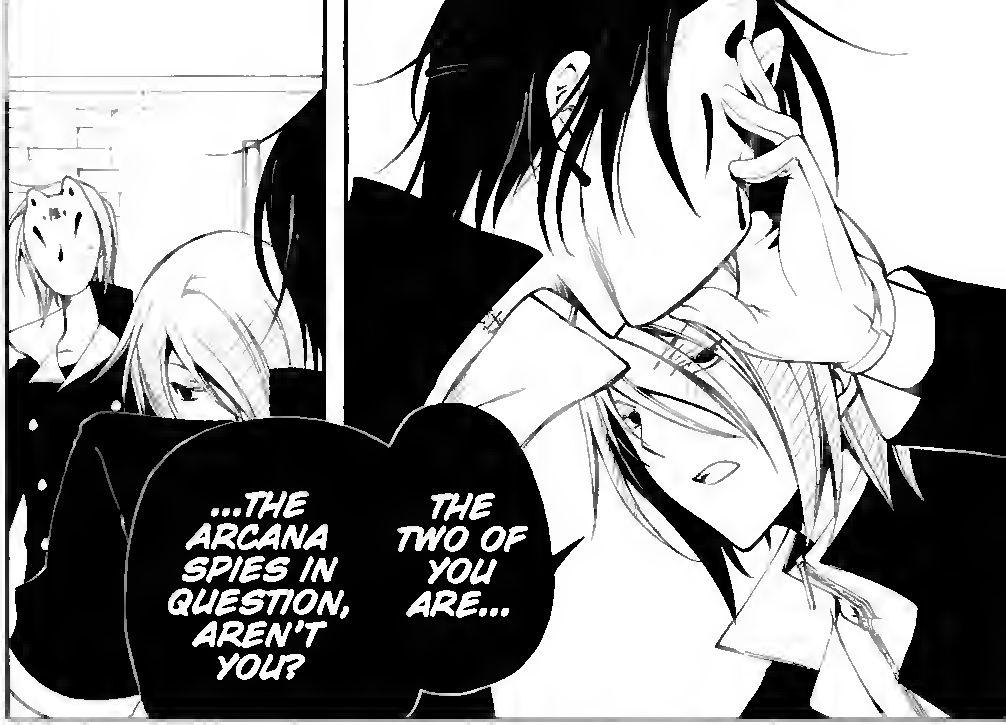
TSUKIMIYA BEING HELD CAPTIVE BY KAMUHABURI IS ON MY MIND TOO...
...BUT THERE'S NOT MUCH WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT...
ONCE THE CRUSADES RESUME, THERE'LL BE NO TIME TO REST...
...SO WE HAVE TO RECHARGE WHILE WE CAN.

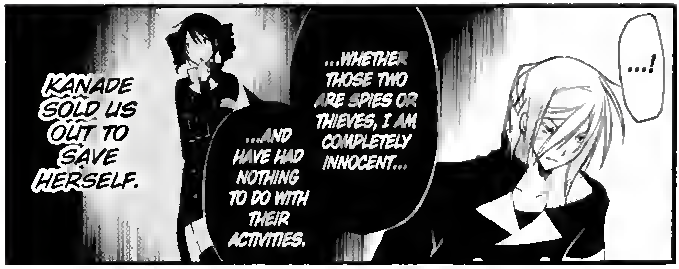
WELL ...
...HE'S PROBABLY OFF HAVING SOME FUN TOO, DON'T YOU THINK?
MM. GOOD!
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I WONDER HOW HINATA'S DOING...

WHAT BLISS ...
AHHH ...

Chapter 31
The Boundary Line




THE TWO OF YOU ARE...
...THE ARCANA SPIES IN QUESTION, AREN'T YOU?


...!
...WHETHER THOSE TWO ARE SPIES OR THIEVES, I AM COMPLETELY INNOCENT...
...AND HAVE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THEIR ACTIVITIES.
KANADE SOLD US OUT TO SAVE HERSELF.

HEE, I CAN ACTUALLY FEEL THE TENSION IN THE AIR.
CAN'T YOU, SETSU?

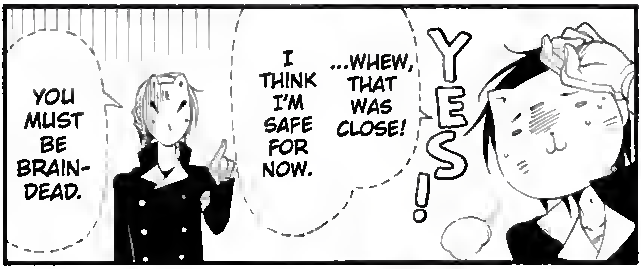
THIS IS WHY I SAID WE SHOULD HAVE MOVED CAUTIOUSLY...
BUT COMPLAINING ABOUT IT WON'T HELP AT THIS POINT.

I DIDN'T EXPECT... ...WE'D BE FOUND OUT SO QUICKLY.

DAMMIT ...HOW DO WE GET OUTTA THIS!?
ATTACK NOW SO WE AREN'T KILLED?
...BUT THEN WE WOULDN'T —
I CAN SEE YOU'RE THINKING FAST, BUT...
...GIVE IT UP.
SNATCH
KARAN KALATTERO

WOW

...HEYYY!!

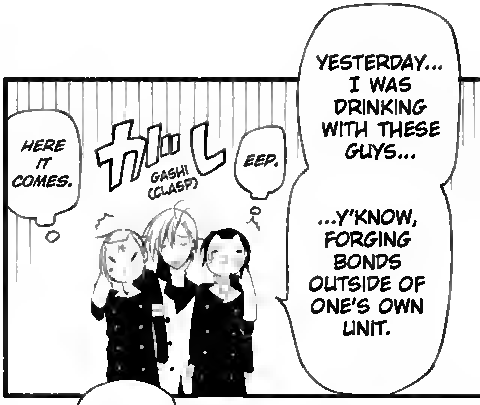

YOU MUST BE BRAIN-DEAD.
I THINK I'M SAFE FOR NOW.
...WHEW, THAT WAS CLOSE!
YES!

SETSU...
...I THINK WE CAN BE SURE THEY'RE THE SPIES.
ULP!
YES, I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S TAKE THEM IN.

...YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
THAT'S EVEN MORE SUSPI-CIOUS.
GO (RUMBL)
FUEL TO THE FIRE.
GO

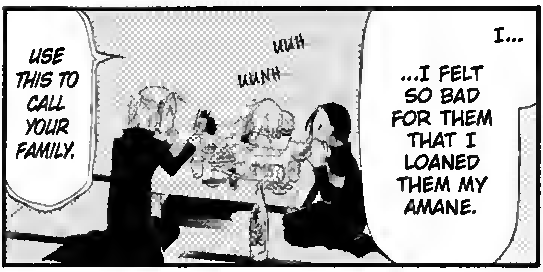
BATA (STOMP)
HANG ON A MINUTE THERE, GUYS!
HEY! SORRY, SORRY!
OHMA-SAN?
BATA
HEY, NOW.
STAND DOWN, STAND DOWN.
RELAX, KIKU-SAKA-SAN.
HEY!
YOU. OUTTA MY WAY.
DON (SHOVE)
HUH?
(ASH! (GRAB)
WH-WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
ER... SORRY TO INTER-RUPT YOU...
WHEN I SAID MY AMANE WAS MISSING ...
PAN (CLAP)
... I WAS COM-PLETELY WRONG!
I'M VERY SOR-RY!
YOU SEE...
...I REALIZED I'D COM-PLETELY FORGOT-TEN...
GOKURI (GULP)
IT'S JUST...
... HUH?
.....

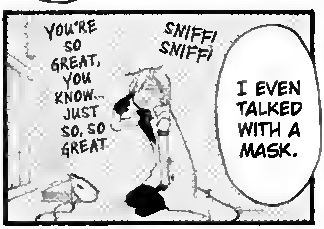
SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS, SET ADRIFT ON THE STREETS WITH YOUNG SIBLINGS, STRIVING ACADEMICALLY AT A YOUTH FACILITY UNTIL ONE YOUNGER SISTER WAS STRUCK WITH AN INCURABLE ILLNESS...
...TEAR-JERK-ING!
I WAS BAWL-ING MY HEAD OFF ALL NIGHT!!
KA (GLOSH)

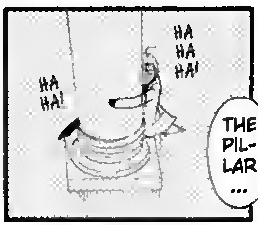

HERE IT COMES.
KASHI (CLASP)
EEP.
YESTERDAY... I WAS DRINKING WITH THESE GUYS...
...Y'KNOW, FORGING BONDS OUTSIDE OF ONE'S OWN UNIT.

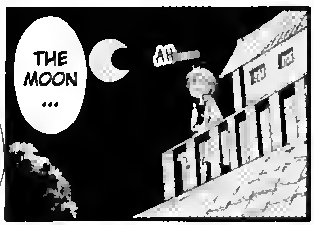
THEIR STO-RIES WERE SO...
HEARING ABOUT THEIR PASTS...
TSU (DRIP)

AND... THAT MADE ME FEEL A LOT BETTER.
IT'S OKAY, IT'S OKAY
HELLO?


USE THIS TO CALL YOUR FAMILY.
WUH
WUHH
I...
...I FELT SO BAD FOR THEM THAT I LOANED THEM MY AMANE.


YOU'RE SO GREAT, YOU KNOW... JUST SO, SO GREAT
SNIFF! SNIFF!
I EVEN TALKED WITH A MASK.

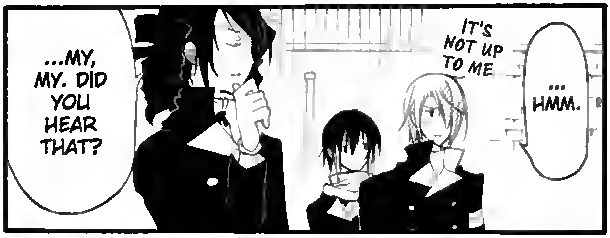

HA HA!
HA HA HA!
THE PIL-LAR ...


THE MOON ...
AH

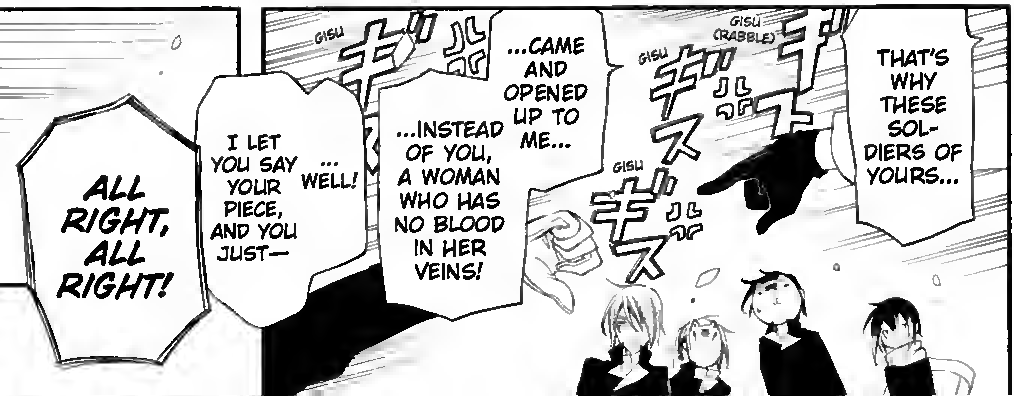
...IS BE-CAUSE THEY THOUGHT IT WAS AGAINST THE RULES FOR THEM TO HAVE MY AMANE.
THE REA-SON THEY RAN...
...
OH!
SU (SSH)
HEH
...AND I'D TOOOTALLY FORGOTTEN THEY HAD MY AMANE.
...IT WAS MORN-ING BEFORE I KNEW IT...

I'LL FILE AN APOLOGY LATER WITH TOKIWA-SAN.
SO WON'T YOU FORGIVE THEM?
ALL IS WELL!

COERCING MEMBERS OF ANOTHER UNIT TO VIOLATE RULES...
...AND NOT EVEN SEEMING TERRIBLY REMORSEFUL ABOUT IT...

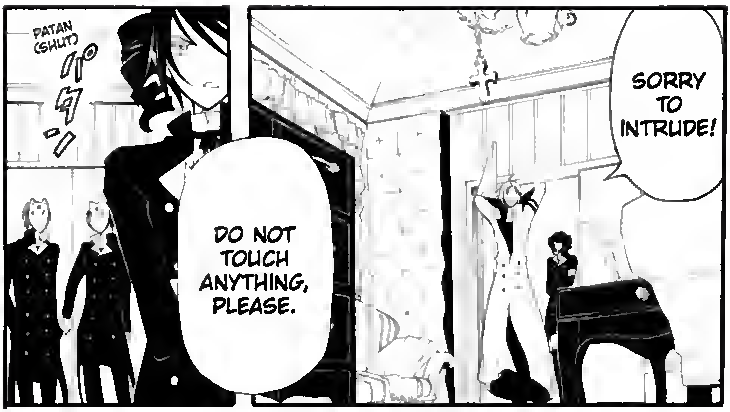

...HMM.
IT'S NOT UP TO ME
...MY, MY. DID YOU HEAR THAT?

AS A UNIT CAPTAIN MYSELF... I CAN'T HELP BUT QUESTION HIS CHARACTER.
OH ...?
PIRI (CRACKLE)
TO HAVE THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE OVER A TIME OF SHARING AND EMPATHY THAT CROSSED UNIT LINES...
... MAKES ME QUESTION YOUR CHARACTER, YOU HEARTLESS BRUTE


THAT'S WHY THESE SOLDIERS OF YOURS...
GISU (RABBLE)
GISU
GISU
...CAME AND OPENED UP TO ME...
...INSTEAD OF YOU, A WOMAN WHO HAS NO BLOOD IN HER VEINS!
... WELL!
I LET YOU SAY YOUR PIECE, AND YOU JUST—
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!

I'LL CONSIDER THE CASE AGAINST THEM WITHDRAWN!
FINE.
GA (SHOVE)
.....
..... MM.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
...THE ACCUSER IS DROPPING THE ACCUSATION, AND THE AMANE HAS BEEN RETURNED.
NOT REALLY, BUT...
SHEESH
...ARE YOU SURE?
.....BUT WHY...?
HYOI (LIFT)
..... WE'RE SAVED.
DO (SLUMP)
...YOU'D BETTER FILL OUT THAT REPORT!
WELL, WE NEED TO REPORT THIS TO TOKIWA-SAN NOW, SO...

WHY DID OHMA HELP US OUT...
...EVEN GOING SO FAR AS LYING LIKE THAT...?
PON (PAT)
NOW, THEN.
JUST UP AHEAD...
...IS THE UNIT SIX CAPTAIN'S OFFICE, I BELIEVE.
AS AN APOLOGY FOR CAUSING THIS SCENE...
...DO YOU THINK IT'S TIME I EXPLAINED WHY I'VE DECEIVED YOUR TEAM?
... YES.
I SUPPOSE IT'S TIME YOU DID.
OKAY. LET'S GO
COME ALONG, YOU TWO.
HUH ...?



SIGN: UNIT SIX OFFICE

WHAT ARE YOU GRUMBLING ABOUT?
AFTER THROWING US UNDER THE BUS...
...SHE'D BETTER NOT BE THINKING WE'RE GONNA HAPPILY GO ON DOING WHATEVER SHE SAYS.

HEY!
...AND ALLOWED YOU TO TASTE THE THRILL OF STONE-COLD MASOCHISM.
HAVE YOU BEEN USE-FUL...
TON (TAP)
SO?
...AS SPIES?
NEVER!
IDIOT!
YOU'RE NO FUUUN
BUT... ...YOU MIGHT DISCOVER YOU'VE SIMILAR TENDEN-CIES!
THESE ARE GOOD LACKEYS— THE KIND WITH SOME COMMON SENSE!
BWA HA!
ZAWA (SHIVER)
.....!!
I AIN'T FALLING FOR IT!!
BO (WOOP)
THIS GUY... IS HE THINKING OF BLACK-MAILING US?
NIYA (SMIRK)
NIYA
SPIES...? US? THAT'S NOT FUNNY, SIR.

GACHA CHA-CLICK
ナイパー

PUT AWAY THAT NASTY SPELL TAG.

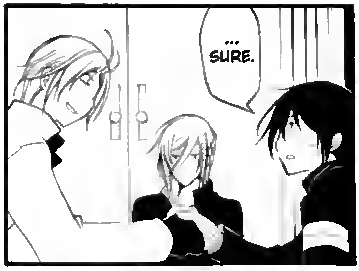
...HEY.

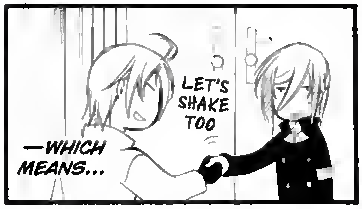
ACTU-ALLY ...
...THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVEN'T TOLD THE TWO OF YOU YET.
GIRI (GRIT)
WILL YOU HEAR ME OUT?

OHMA HERE...
BI (POINT)
...IS ANOTHER ARCANA SPY—A COMRADE-IN-ARMS.
PAN (POP)
PACHI (CLAP)
PACHI
PACHI

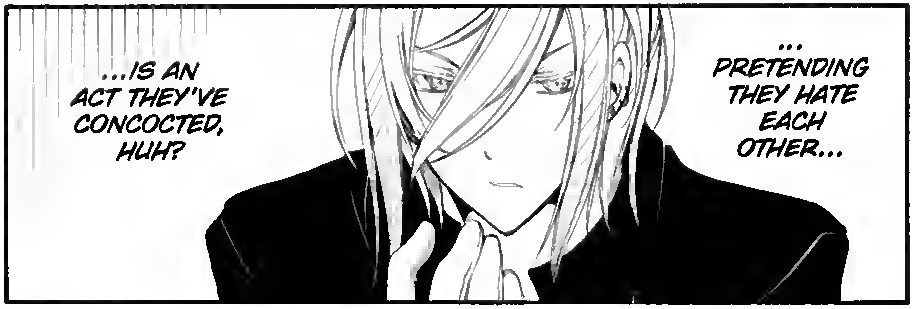
WHAAAAT!!?
I INTRODUCED HIM TO ARCANA MYSELF.
SEEING YOU SO SHOCKED
MAKES ME BLUSH
THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH ONE CAN DO ON HER OWN.

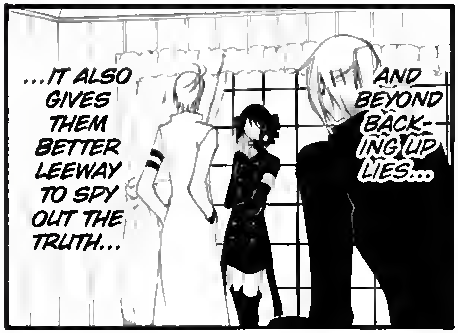
SHE'S GOT A TWISTED PERSONALITY...
TAKE BACK ALL THAT STRESS YOU PUT US THROUGH!
...I BET SHE HASN'T BEEN BACKING YOU UP AT ALL.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.

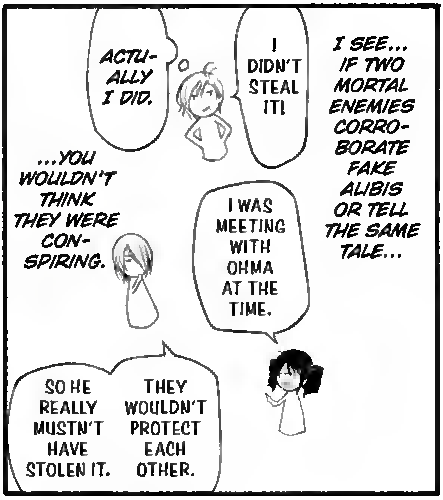

... SURE.


LET'S SHAKE TOO
—WHICH MEANS...

WELL ...
...IT MAY ONLY BE FOR A SHORT WHILE, BUT I HOPE WE CAN ENJOY WORKING TOGETHER.

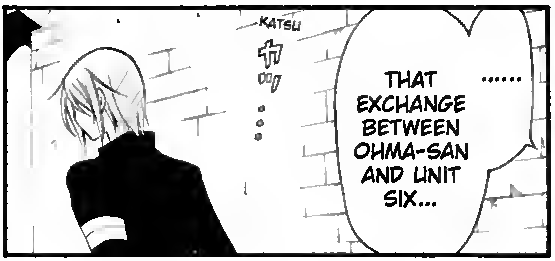

...IS AN ACT THEY'VE CONCOCTED, HUH?
... PRETENDING THEY HATE EACH OTHER...

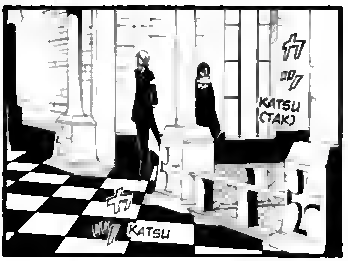

...IT ALSO GIVES THEM BETTER LEEWAY TO SPY OUT THE TRUTH...
AND BEYOND BACK-ING UP LIES...


I SEE... IF TWO MORTAL ENEMIES CORRO-BORATE FAKE ALIBIS OR TELL THE SAME TALE...
I DIDN'T STEAL IT!
ACTU-ALLY I DID.
...YOU WOULDN'T THINK THEY WERE CON-SPIRING.
I WAS MEETING WITH OHMA AT THE TIME.
THEY WOULDN'T PROTECT EACH OTHER.
SO HE REALLY MUSTN'T HAVE STOLEN IT.

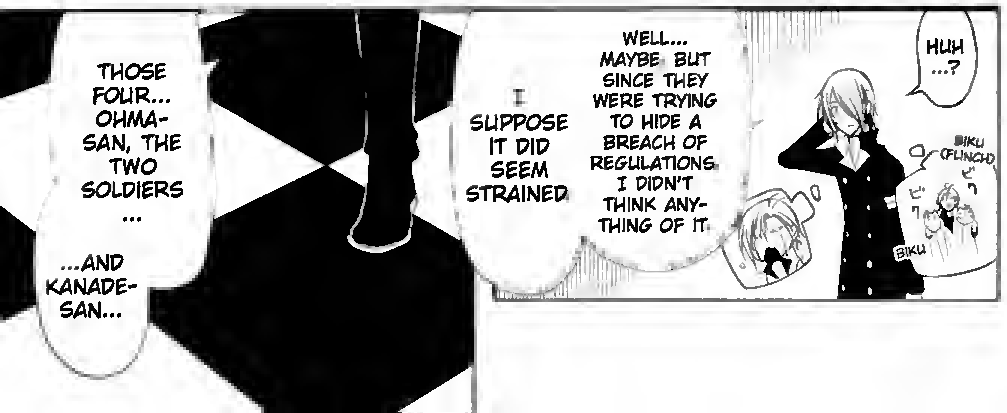
BUT GEEZ ...

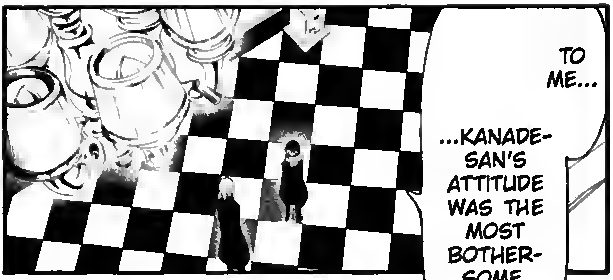
I DEFINITELY DON'T WANT THEM AS MY ENEMY.
ARCANA... THEY'D ALREADY BOUGHT OFF TWO KAMUHABURI OFFICERS WHEN THEY RECRUITED ME...

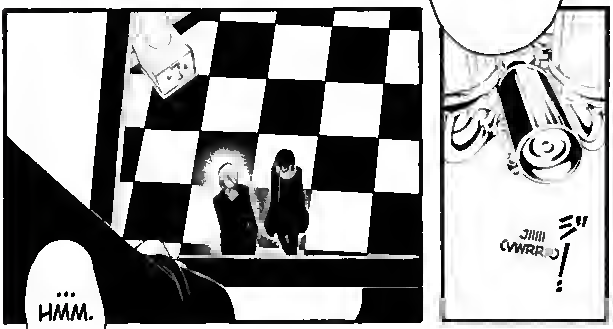

KATSU
.....
THAT EXCHANGE BETWEEN OHMA-SAN AND UNIT SIX...


KATSU (TAK)
KATSU

DID IT NOT SEEM THAT WAY TO YOU, KIKUSAKA-SAN?
IT FELT TO ME LIKE THEY WERE HIDING SOME-THING.

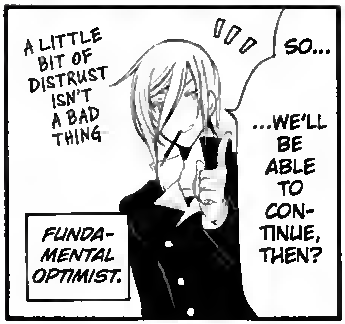

THOSE FOUR... OHMA-SAN, THE TWO SOLDIERS ...
...AND KANADE-SAN...
I SUPPOSE IT DID SEEM STRAINED
WELL... MAYBE BUT SINCE THEY WERE TRYING TO HIDE A BREACH OF REGULATIONS I DIDN'T THINK ANY-THING OF IT.
HUH ...?
BIKU (FLINCH)
BIKU


TO ME...
...KANADE-SAN'S ATTITUDE WAS THE MOST BOTHER-SOME.


...HMM.
JIIIII CWWRR
ミ"!

THIS ISN'T GOOD.
HE'S STILL SUSPI-CIOUS.

I THINK...
...WE OUGHT TO OBSERVE THEM A WHILE LONGER.


SO...
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO CON-TINUE, THEN?
A LITTLE BIT OF DISTRUST ISN'T A BAD THING
FUNDA-MENTAL OPTIMIST.

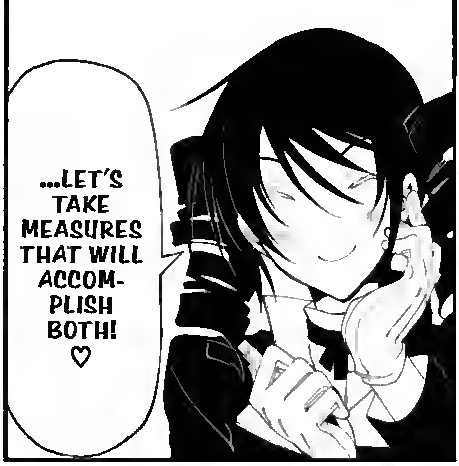
IT WAS BRILLIANT FOR A SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT EXCUSE. THEY DIDN'T FIGURE IT OUT.
WHOA... WHAT AN INVASION OF PRIVACY.
PORI PORI-CKRNCHO
BARI CCRUNCHO
BORI CMUNCHO
THERE'S NOTHING CUTE ABOUT HAVING GOOD SUSPI-CIOUS INSTINCTS.

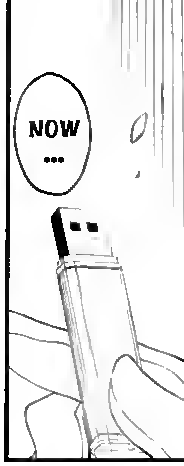
TO BE FRANK... COUNTLESS OTHERS HAVE TRIED TO SMUGGLE OUT INTEL ON KAMU-HABURI BEFORE NOW...
...BUT THEY'VE ALL FAILED AND BEEN EXEC-UTED.
...HUH?
HURK!
.....
WE'RE AN ORGANIZATION THAT HAS BEEN OVERSEEING THE CRUSADES FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS WITHOUT OUR INVOLVEMENT COMING TO LIGHT.
YOU UNDER-ESTI-MATE KAMU-HABURI.
OH MY, THAT'S AS SICKLY SWEET AS A MILLE CREPE.
OUR GOAL IS TO OBTAIN ARCANA'S FAVOR AND TRUST, NOT THEIR CASH.
OBTAINING MONEY ALONE IS TOTALLY MEANING-LESS.
BOTO
BOTO (PLOP)
GA (GRAB)
WHY NOT DO HONEST WORK?
ARE YOU BOTH STUPID?
NO WAY... AND YOU'RE VOLUN-TARILY TAKING PART IN SUCH A SUICIDAL MISSION?
.....
GENNARI (SLUMP)
...HUH?
I'D HEARD YOU WERE CLEVER ...
...BUT YOU'RE ONLY SEEING THE SURFACE.

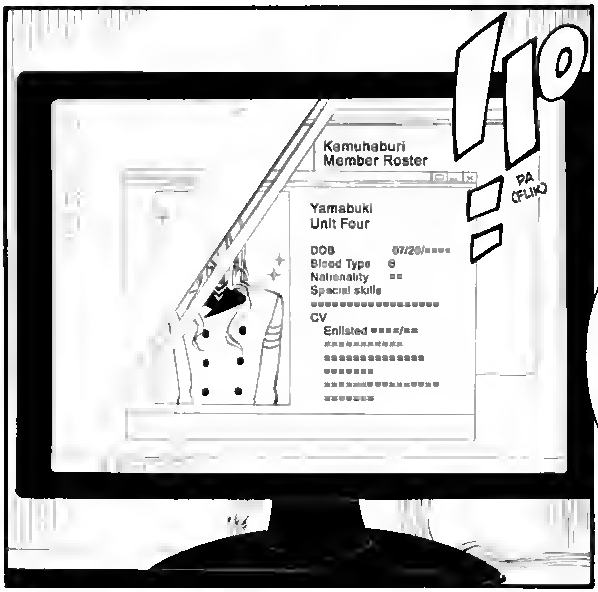
COVERT ORGANI-ZATIONS LIKE THIS ONE...
...ARE A GREAT DEAL HARDER TO EXIT THAN THEY ARE TO ENTER.
.....DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
.....I GET IT.
SUCKS, RIGHT?
...EVEN TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. AND THEN THEY'RE EXECUTED.
GUGL (DIG)
THOSE WHO ESCAPE ARE DOGGEDLY TRACKED DOWN...
TO PRE-SERVE ITS SECRETS, LEAVING IS PRO-HIBITED ...
...IN RETURN FOR THEIR PROTECTION AFTER YOU RUN.
...ARE SELLING TOP-SECRET KAMU-HABURI INTEL TO ARCANA...
BASI-CALLY YOU TWO...
...WANT OUT OF HERE, NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES.
THE TWO OF US...
...SO THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON.
KOFF!
PA (PAT)
AH ...
NOW YOU'RE BEING SMART.

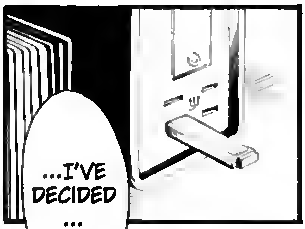
AND ONCE WE'RE FREE...
...WE CAN FINALLY CELE-BRATE AND ENJOY OUR NEW LIVES.
KOFF!
... YEAH, RIGHT.
NOW! IN ANY CASE...
...EVEN A WEE BIT OF SUSPICION IS FATAL INSIDE KAMU-HABURI.
PAN (CLAP) PAN
WE MUST DISPEL IT QUICKLY.
WE HAVEN'T DONE QUITE ENOUGH...
...TO TRIGGER AN INTERNAL BREAK-DOWN YET EITHER.
MM.
IN THAT CASE ...
GOSO (RSTL) GOSO
GOSO
WHERE WERE YOU HIDING IT?
!
FOUND IT.

YES.
I'D RATHER HAVE SAVED THIS FOR LATER, BUT...
ACCOM-PLISH BOTH?
KATA (TAP)
A FLASH DRIVE
KATA

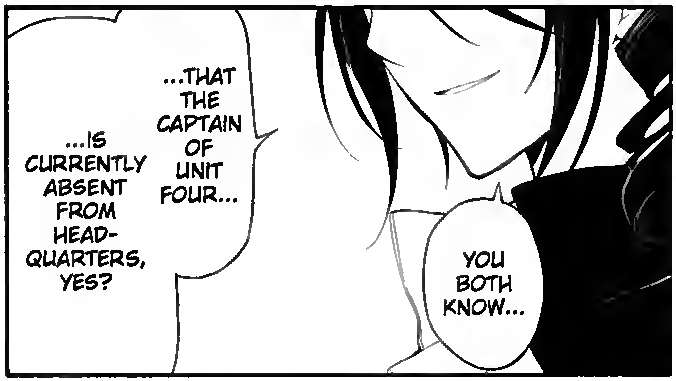

...LET'S TAKE MEASURES THAT WILL ACCOM-PLISH BOTH! ♡


NOW ...


!!O
PA (FLIP)
Kamuhaburi Member Roster
Yamabuki Unit Four
DOB
Blood Type
Nationality
Special skills
CV
Enlisted

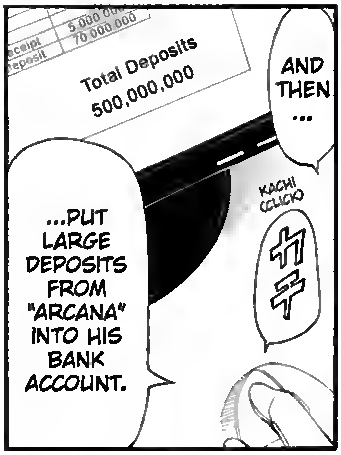

...I'VE DECIDED ...

...NOT TO BE STINGY.
TON (TAP)
Enter


...IS CURRENTLY ABSENT FROM HEAD-QUARTERS, YES?
...THAT THE CAPTAIN OF UNIT FOUR...
YOU BOTH KNOW...

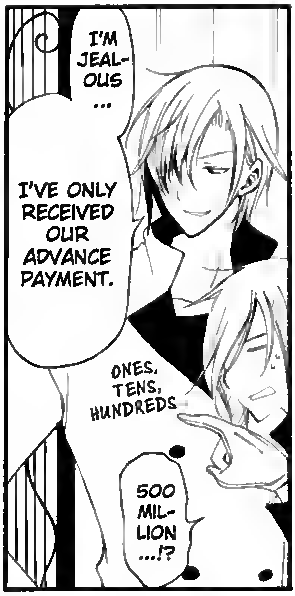
WHOA... WHAT A SUPER-PRETTY FACE!
HE SPARKLES
YAMA-BUKI... SAN?

—I'M GOING TO FRAME...
...THIS OTHER OFFICER.
!
FRAME HIM?
AHA.
I HAVE ENOUGH DATA ON HIM ALREADY.
ENTERING SECURITY CODE.
AND CLEAR.
ID
security code
OK
UN LOCK


Total Deposits
500,000,000
AND THEN ...
KACHI CLICK
...PUT LARGE DEPOSITS FROM "ARCANA" INTO HIS BANK ACCOUNT.

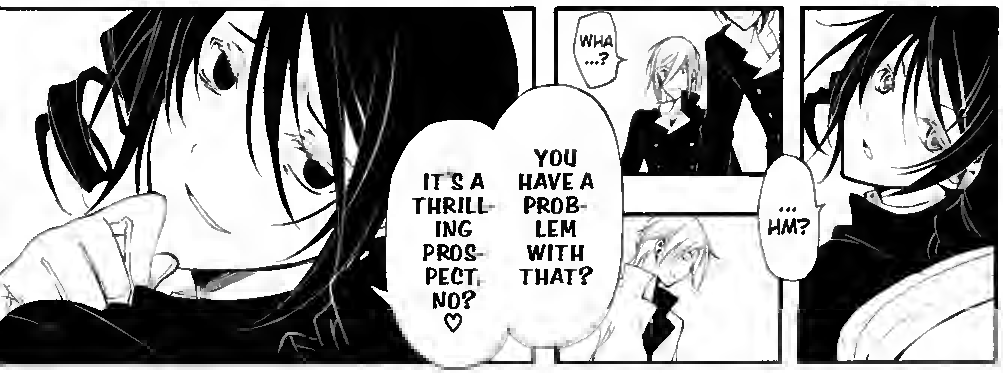
HACKING THE UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN'S PERSONAL LOG.
KATA (TAP)
KATA
FIRST, LET'S TAKE OHMA'S AND MY E-MAILS WITH ARCANA ...
...AND MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HE'S THE ONE WHO WROTE TO THEM.

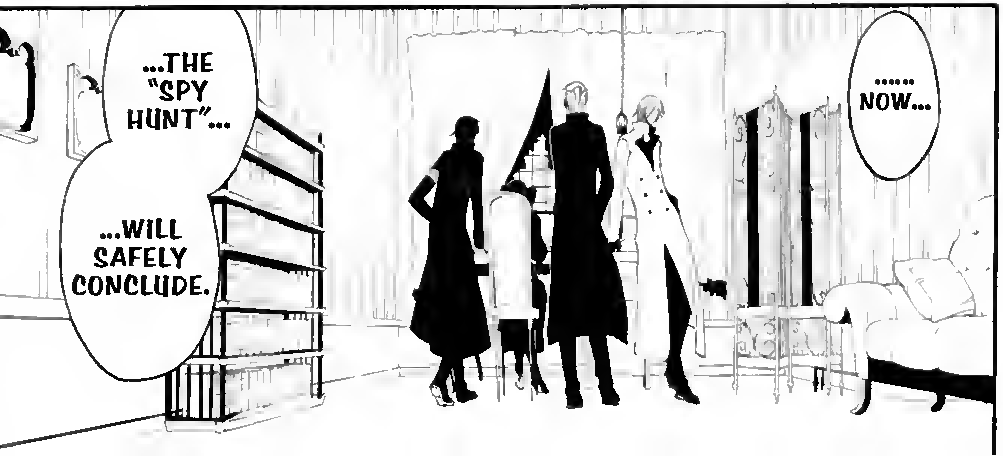
LAST-LY...
...I ERASE ALL TRACES OF MY TAMPERING.
CLEAR.

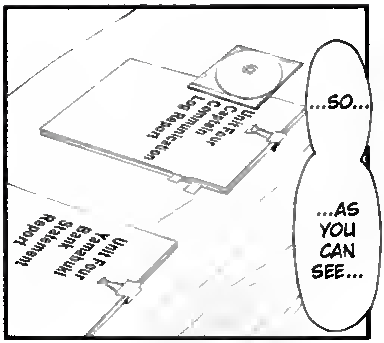

I'M JEAL-OUS ...
I'VE ONLY RECEIVED OUR ADVANCE PAYMENT.
ONES, TENS, HUNDREDS
500 MIL-LION ....!?

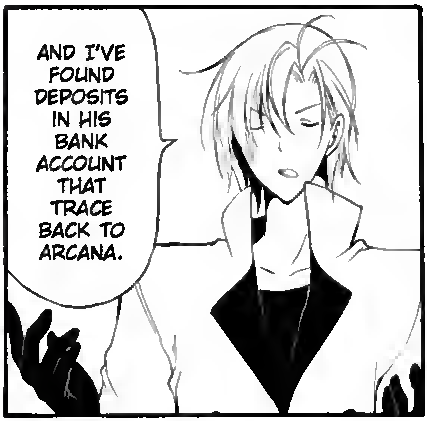
SO WHAT SHE'S SAYING IS...
.....
BY "FRAME," YOU MEAN...

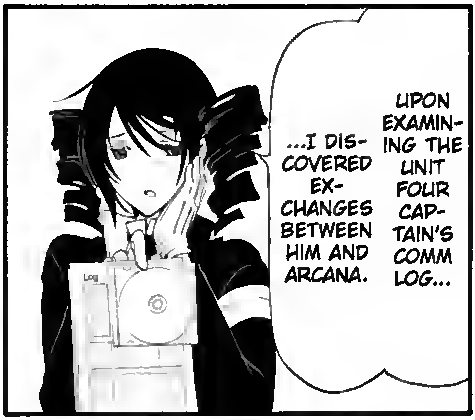
...YOU'RE GOING TO LET THIS UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN TAKE THE FALL AND ALL THE BLAME FOR YOUR WORK AS AN ARCANA SPY...
...AND HAVE HIM EXECUTED IN YOUR PLACE?


WHA...?
...HM?
YOU HAVE A PROB-LEM WITH THAT?
IT'S A THRILL-ING PROS-PECT, NO? ♡


.....NOW...
...THE "SPY HUNT"...
...WILL SAFELY CONCLUDE.


Unit Four Captain's Communication Log Report
Unit Four Yamabuki Bank Statement Report
...SO...
...AS YOU CAN SEE...


AND I'VE FOUND DEPOSITS IN HIS BANK ACCOUNT THAT TRACE BACK TO ARCANA.


...I DISCOVERED EXCHANGES BETWEEN HIM AND ARCANA.
UPON EXAMINING THE UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN'S COMM LOG...

...IS CERTAINLY THE GUY YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
BASED ON THIS EVIDENCE, CAPTAIN YAMABUKI OF UNIT FOUR...

MM...
YOUR PROOF HAD BETTER BE SOUND.
.....
TOO BAD.
MY EVIDENCE IS BETTER THAN YOURS.
HUH? ARE YOU AN IDIOT?
WHAT I SUBMITTED IS OF GREATER VALUE.
GEEZ ..
I HAVE NO TOLERANCE FOR BRAINLESS APES.
(GISU (RABBLE))
GISU
...
YEAH, WELL, YOU'RE A BABOON!
I'LL RIP YOUR HAIR OUT!
GISU
DON (BANG)
QUIET!!
.....
KIKU-SAKA...
WHERE ARE UNIT FOUR AND CAPTAIN YAMABUKI?
Hmm, I believe...
...they're in Egypt?

MAN, THE SAHARA IS MAGNIFI-CENT!
A SPLENDID VIEW BEFITTING MY SPLENDID GORGEOUS-NESS!!
THE UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN ON AN AWAY MISSION.
HAVE HIM EXE-CUTED.
GACHA (KACHAK)
GORI (GRIND)
...HAS JUST GIVEN THE ORDER TO EXECUTE YOU AS A TRAITOR.
KAMU-HABURI HEAD-QUAR-TERS...
WHAT IS IT, COM-RADES?
HM?
... CAP-TAIN.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CARE...

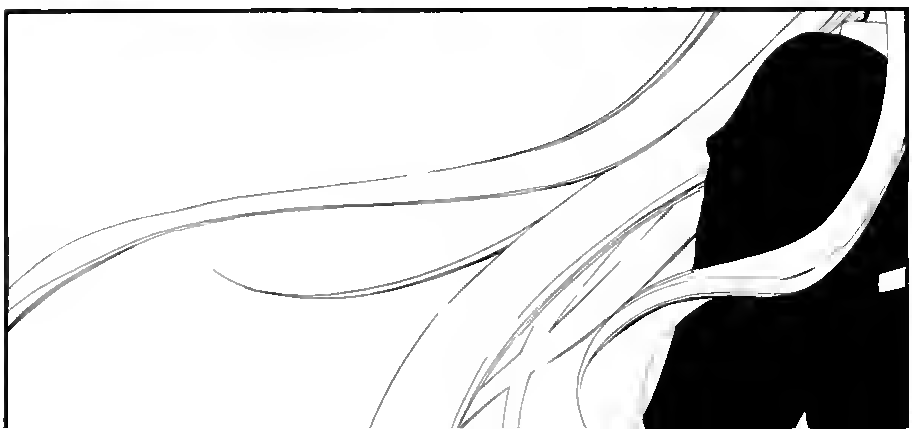
KANADE AND OHMA ARE IN CAHOOTS.
...AND GOT HIM EXECUTED AS THE SPY, INSTEAD ...HUH.
THEY SHIFTED BLAME ONTO THE ABSENT UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN...
DON (BLAM)
AT THIS RATE, I BET THEY'LL SUCCEED AT CAUSING THIS PLACE TO IMPLODE IN ON ITSELF.
...ARE GOING TO HELL WHEN THEY DIE.
NOT THAT I'M REALLY ONE TO TALK, BUT THOSE TWO...
KATSU (TAK)
KATSU
...THE RELICS OR TSUKI-MIYA.
WE HAVEN'T FOUND INFO ON EITHER OBJEC-TIVE...
WE HAVEN'T MADE ANY PROGRESS AT ALL... WORRY ABOUT US.
WHO CARES? FORGET 'EM.

KATSU
(TAK)

THIS GUY ...
JI (STARE)
KOTSU
KOTSU (TOK)

.....

KIKU-SAKA STILL HAS HIS DOUBTS ...
...ABOUT US.
KOTSU



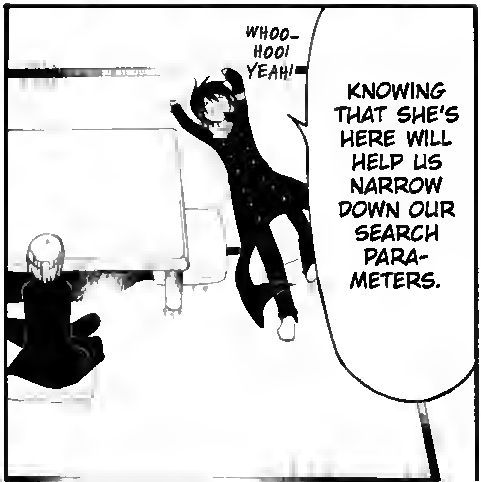
KOTSU
CTOKO

陸
HUH!?
—TSUKI-MIYA!!

PAN
(WHAP)

PHEW.
SHE'S ALIVE, AT LEAST.
HAAH...
SO WE'VE AT LEAST CONFIRMED THAT MUCH.
TSUKIMIYA'S BEEN HERE AT HEADQUARTERS ALL THIS TIME AFTER ALL!

OH...
I'M ALLERGIC TO JERKS.
KON (KNOCK)
KON
HUH?
HUH?
WHY'RE YOU SANITIZING YOUR GLOVES?
FUKI
FUKI (WIPE)
DISINFECTANT


WHOO-HOO! YEAH!
KNOWING THAT SHE'S HERE WILL HELP US NARROW DOWN OUR SEARCH PARAMETERS.

PATAN (SHUT)
PARDON ME.
... HMM?
WHY ARE YOU SMIRKING LIKE THAT? IT'S CREEPY.
WHAT'S UP?
IN MY CURRENT GOOD MOOD, I'LL LET YOUR SARCASM ROLL RIGHT OFF.
REAL-LY.
WELL, I DIDN'T COME HERE TO QUARREL, SO...
...IT'S NO MATTER TO ME.
TSU (PAT)
JUST SO YOU KNOW...
CAPTAIN YAMABUKI OF UNIT FOUR...
...WAS JUST DISMISSED ON TOKIWA'S ORDERS?

KAMU-HABURI SURE DOES MOVE FAST...
...IN STUFF LIKE THAT.
OH?
...A NEW UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN WAS APPOINTED.
YES. AND JUST MO-MENTS AGO...
YEAH, THANKS TO YOU.
WELL... TO US OUT-SIDERS...
...IT HON-ESTLY DOESN'T MATTER WHO'S CAPTAIN.
THEY'RE ALL THE SAME.
...OH...
?
...I...
...WONDER ABOUT THAT.

THIS NEW CAPTAIN...
KOTSU (GO)
...IS SOMEONE QUITE FAMILIAR TO THE TWO OF YOU.

AS ORDERED...
...I, TSUKIMIYA, HEREBY ASSUME MY POST...
...AS KAMUHABURI UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN.

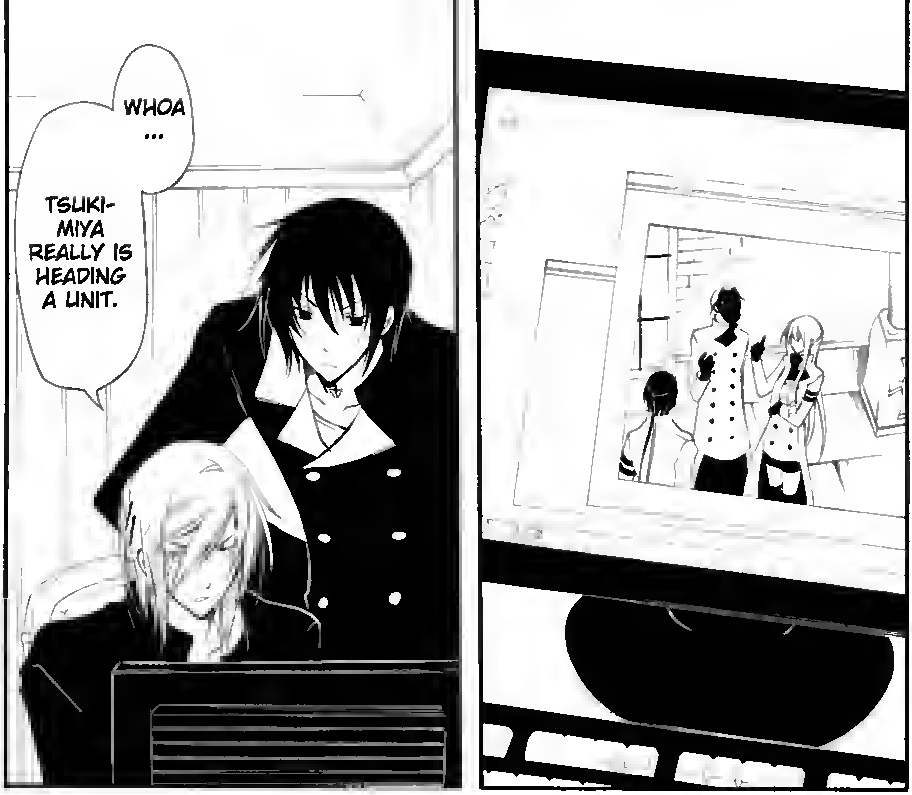
BLOODY CROSS

...WHA...!?
TSUKI-MIYA...
...IS KAMU-HABURI'S NEW UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN!?

Chapter 32
The Wolf Hungry for Bonds

Chapter 32
The Wolf Hungry for Bonds

BLOODY CROSS


WHOA ...
TSUKIMIYA REALLY IS HEADING A UNIT.

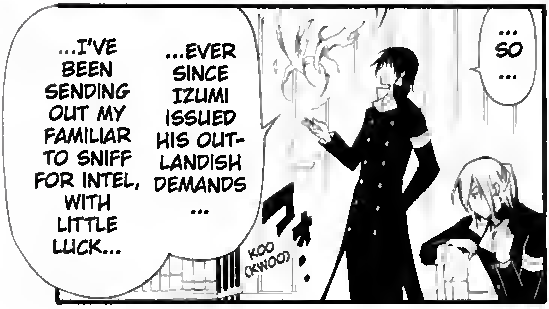
WE'VE CONFIRMED THAT TSUKIMIYA'S ALIVE AT LEAST.
... WELL ...
...IT DOESN'T MATTER WHICH UNIT SHE'S CAPTAINING.

WHAT THEN?
WE WAIT UNTIL SHE'S ALONE?
BUT HER UNIT FOUR TROOPS WILL MAKE IT HARD TO GET NEAR HER.

NO...NO CONTACT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE.
IF WE APPROACH HER AND SCREW IT UP, SHE MIGHT GET TRANSFERRED ELSEWHERE.
WE SHOULD TRY TO TALK TO HER WHEN WE'RE ON OUR WAY OUT.
INSTEAD, LET'S PRIORITIZE OUR OTHER OBJECTIVE...
...OBTAINING INTEL ON THE KAMUHABURI'S DIVINE RELICS.
!
ONCE WE COLLECT TSUKIMIYA AND THE INTEL...
SHA (SWISH)
...WE'RE DONE... AND WE CAN LEAVE.
I WANT OUT OF THIS ENEMY TERRITORY, STAT.
I'M ABOUT TO GO MAD FROM THE STRESS.
.....
KIRI (CRAMP)
KIRI
KIRI

—INTEL ON DIVINE RELICS...

HE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT ALL OF THE RELICS KAMUHABURI HAS AMASSED.
IZUMI DOESN'T JUST WANT INTELLI-GENCE ON THE RELICS STOLEN FROM ARCANA.


...I'VE BEEN SENDING OUT MY FAMILIAR TO SNIFF FOR INTEL, WITH LITTLE LUCK...
...EVER SINCE IZUMI ISSUED HIS OUT-LANDISH DEMANDS ...
...SO ...
KOO (KWOO)

...IN EXCHANGE... HE'LL UNDO MY MIXED-RACE CURSE. THAT'S THE DEAL.
GU (CLENCH)

WHAT A COINCI-DENCE.
ME TOO.
SHIT!

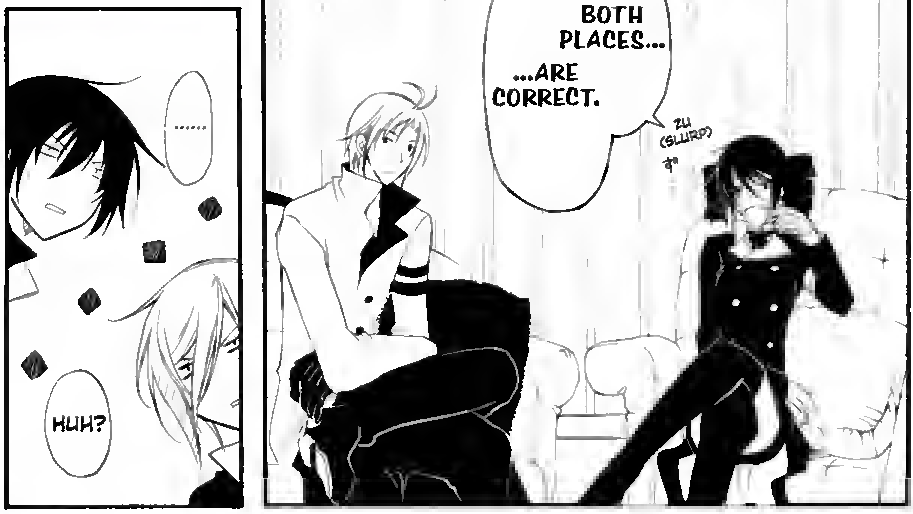
BASA (FLAP)
RE-JOICE.
AT LONG LAST, I'VE FINALLY FOUND A PROMISING LOCATION.
PIIT (SKREE)

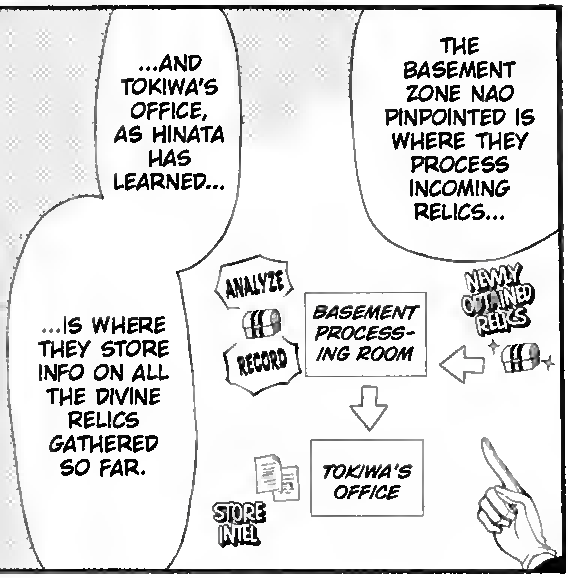
KAMU-HABURI'S RELIC RECORDS ARE LOCATED...
...IN TOKI-WA'S OFFICE!
...IN A RE-STRICT-ED ZONE IN THE BASE-MENT!
DON (TA-DAA!)
.....
.....

.....
...HEY, QUIT PULLING MY LEG ALREADY, WILL YA?
THE BOSS HAS IT. IT AIN'T IN THE BASEMENT.

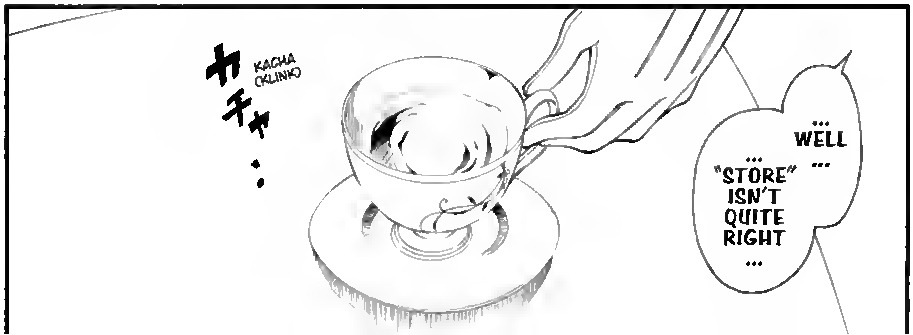
PAN (CLAP)
PAN
GI (TENSED)
GI
...NOW, NOW.
I'VE HEARD EVERY-THING AND YOU'RE BOTH FOOLS.

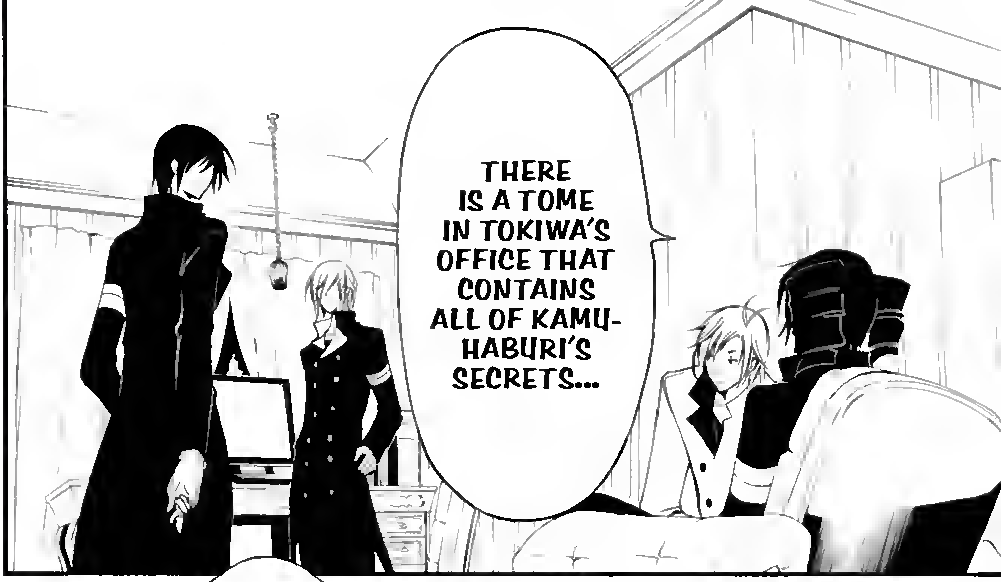
YOU'RE THE DUMB-ASS.
SUCH AN OBVIOUS SPOT'S GOTTA BE A BLUFF! THE BASEMENT IS IT!


BOTH PLACES...
...ARE CORRECT.
ZU (SLURP)
.....
HUH?


THE BASEMENT ZONE NAO PINPOINTED IS WHERE THEY PROCESS INCOMING RELICS...
...AND TOKIWA'S OFFICE, AS HINATA HAS LEARNED...
...IS WHERE THEY STORE INFO ON ALL THE DIVINE RELICS GATHERED SO FAR.
ANALYZE
RECORD
BASEMENT PROCESS-ING ROOM
NEWLY OBTAINED RELICS
TOKIWA'S OFFICE
STORE

SIMPLY PUT, THE INFO IS SPLIT BETWEEN TWO PLACES.
THEY'RE STILL PROCESSING THE RELICS STOLEN FROM ARCANA, YOU SEE.
BI (ZWP)


KACHA (KLINK)
...WELL ...
..."STORE" ISN'T QUITE RIGHT ...


THERE IS A TOME IN TOKIWA'S OFFICE THAT CONTAINS ALL OF KAMU-HABURI'S SECRETS...

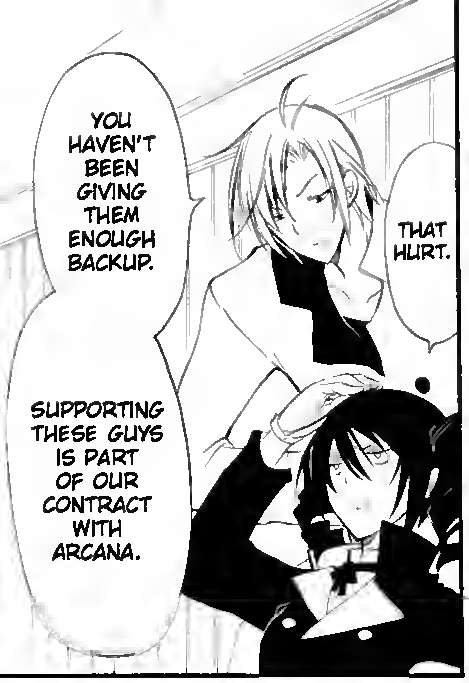
THE KAMIGURA.

YOU'RE IN A QUAN-DARY?
OH, OH, OH!
PAAAA CGLEAM!

DON'T CAUSE ANY MORE TROUBLE FOR ME.
BUT BE CARE-FUL.
YOU'RE WEL-COME TO TRY TO STEAL IT.

KAMI-GURA ...?

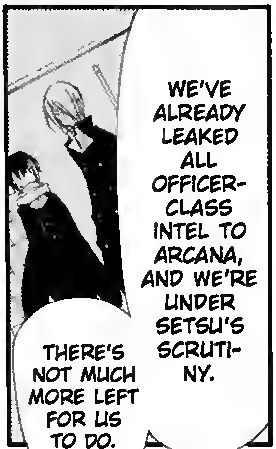
...I GUESS WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE... HAAH.
WELL, I'D RATHER NOT GO NEAR TOKIWA, BUT...
TCH... YOU REALLY AREN'T GONNA HELP.


YOU HAVEN'T BEEN GIVING THEM ENOUGH BACKUP.
THAT HURT.
SUPPORTING THESE GUYS IS PART OF OUR CONTRACT WITH ARCANA.

THRILLING!
AHH... DIFFICULT CIRCUM-STANCES ARE JUST TOO WONDER-FUL!
THE FEELING OF MY HEART BEING ON EDGE...
...IS QUITE STIMU-LATING ...
みし。
MISHI CMASH
I GET IT NOW. NO WONDER YOU'VE MADE NO PROG-RESS.

IT'S OKAY, OHMA. SHE'S A PERV WHO ENJOYS OTHERS' PAIN.
YOUR SENTI-MENT IS ENOUGH
BUWA CGUSH
ぶわ
UNH! IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE'VE HEARD SUCH KIND WORDS ...!
WHA ...?
LET'S LEND THEM A HAND.
I MEAN, BOTH THE KAMIGURA AND THE RESTRICTED ZONE ARE TOO DIFFICULT FOR NEWCOMERS TO TAKE ON.

... MM ...
YES. PER-HAPS ...
...IT'S TIME WE DEFECT TO ARCANA WITH THE KAMIGURA AS OUR GIFT...

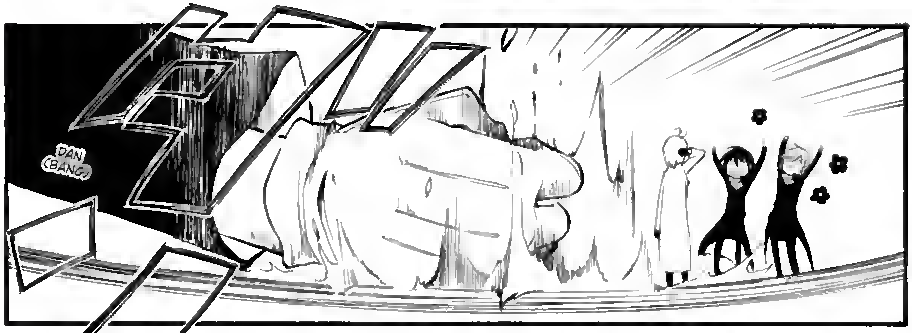

WE'VE ALREADY LEAKED ALL OFFICER-CLASS INTEL TO ARCANA, AND WE'RE UNDER SETSU'S SCRUTI-NY.
THERE'S NOT MUCH MORE LEFT FOR US TO DO.

... BE-SIDES ...
...OUR WORK IS STARTING TO COME TO A STAND-STILL TOO.

WHA ...?

NO !?
YOU PERSUADED THAT PERV!?
AMAZING!
LET ME CALL YOU ANIKI!
AW, STOP IT.
わああ
WAAAA (CLAMOR)

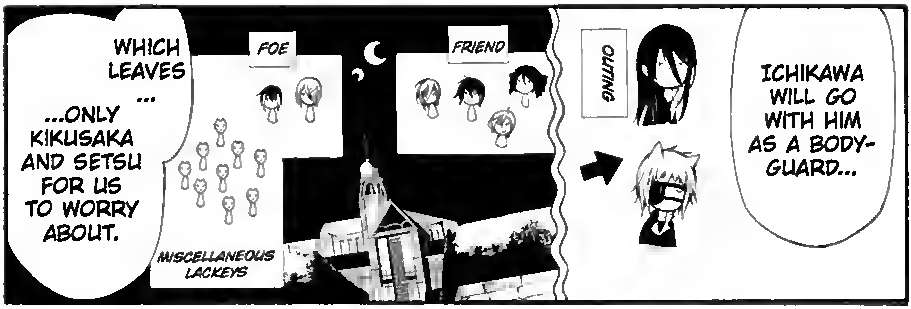
I SUPPOSE IT WAS INEVITABLE.
... HAAH ...
IT'S A BOTHER, BUT ALL RIGHT.
I'LL GO ALONG WITH IT.


DAN (BANG)

I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH YOU...
GOKURI (GULP)
...SO LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY AND UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF WHAT I'M SAYING.

IF WE SLIP UP AND GET CAUGHT, WE'LL BE EXECUTED...
GO (RMBL)
GO
GO
GO
GO
HOWEVER...
...IF WE'RE GOING TO DO IT, WE'RE GOING TO DO IT SUCCESSFULLY.

...TOKIWA WILL BE ABSENT FROM KAMU-HABURI HEAD-QUARTERS.
...TONIGHT...


WHICH LEAVES...
...ONLY KIKUSAKA AND SETSU FOR US TO WORRY ABOUT.
FOE
FRIEND
MISCELLANEOUS LACKEYS
OUTING
ICHIKAWA WILL GO WITH HIM AS A BODY-GUARD...

WE NEED TO STEAL THE KAMI-GURA...
...AND LEAVE KAMU-HABURI TONIGHT.

...IT'S DEFI-NITELY A BIG OPPOR-TUNITY.
BUT...
KIKU-SAKA AND SETSU... THE TWO WHO SUSPECT US.

WIRE-TAP JAMMER ON
COMM LOG FUNC-TION OFF
KASHO (KSHUK)
YES... AND WHO KNOWS WHEN WE'LL NEXT GET ANOTHER CHANCE.

HELLO ?
PI! (BEEP)
ピロロ
PLLL:
ILL

I have urgent news to report.
AH, KA-NADE.
It's Ka-nade.

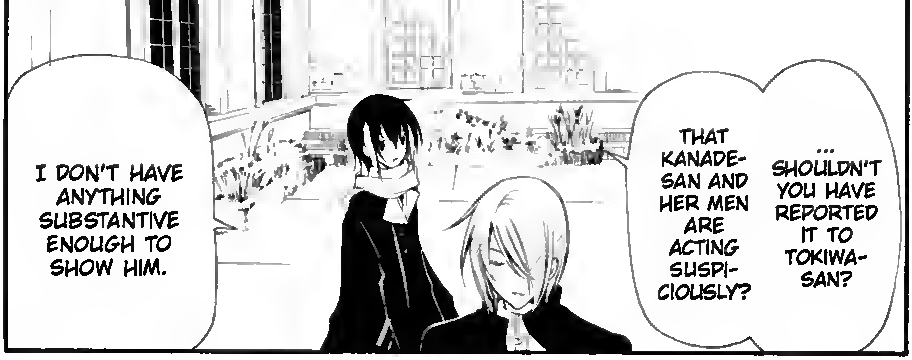
THERE-FORE...
...YOU MUST BE READY TO MOVE AS SOON AS WE HAND OVER THE INFOR-MATION.

WE WILL LEAVE HEAD-QUARTERS AND RENDEZ-VOUS WITH ARCANA.
TO-NIGHT...
...WE FOUR PLAN TO STEAL KAMUHABU-RI'S RELIC INTELLI-GENCE.

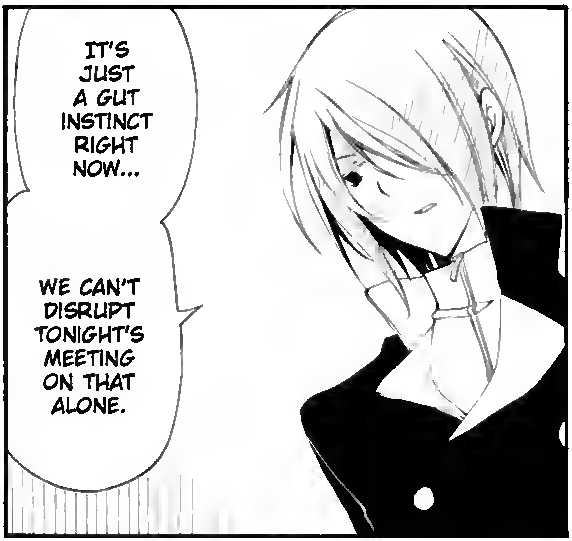
TRUE.
...I EXPECT TOKIWA WILL TRY TO CHANGE THE RELICS' HIDING PLACE.
ONCE THEY REALIZE THAT THEIR INFO HAS BEEN STOLEN ...

MA-KINO-KUN.
HOW ARE RELIC RETRIEVAL PREPA-RATIONS COMING?
I HOPE YOU ARE SUCCESS-FUL.
UNDER-STOOD. I'LL ARRANGE IT.
MAID CAFÉ
INSIDE THE ELEVATOR
INTEL
INTEL
ARCANA
...FROM KAMU-HABURI'S ELEVATOR AND CAFÉ.
YES... I'VE CONFIRMED, SAMPLED, AND DECODED A NUMBER OF SPELL FORMULAS...
SO AS LONG AS SIMILAR SPELLS ARE USED AT THE RELICS' HIDING PLACE...
NI (GRIND)
...WE'LL RIP THROUGH AND RE-COVER THEM SWIFTLY.
IT WOULD BE NICE...
...IF WE WERE ABLE TO INFLICT MORE LOSSES UPON THEM THAN THEY DID ON US.
...GOOD.
CARRY ON, THEN.

...I HATE TO LEAVE WITH THINGS SO CHAOTIC...
...BUT WE HAVE A CRUCIAL MEETING TONIGHT.
YES, TOKIWA-SAN.
I'M RELYING ON YOU, KIKUSAKA.
AND YOU, SETSU.
HAVE A SAFE TRIP. TAKE CARE.
WELL.
...LET'S GET BACK INSIDE.
OPEN PAS-SAGE!
ZAAA CZWOOSHO


I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING SUBSTANTIVE ENOUGH TO SHOW HIM.
THAT KANADE-SAN AND HER MEN ARE ACTING SUSPICIOUSLY?
... SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE REPORTED IT TO TOKIWA-SAN?

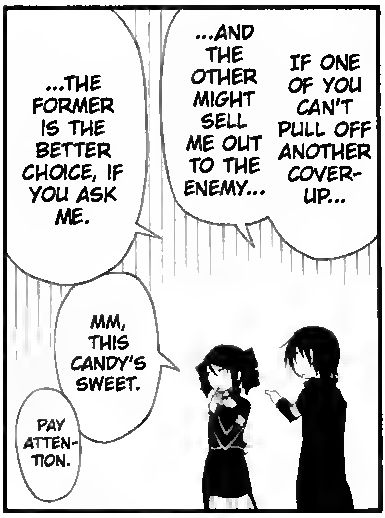
.....
...BUT...
...I FEEL IT TOO, SETSU. I DON'T THINK YAMABUKI-SAN'S EXECUTION HAS SOLVED OUR SPY WORRIES.
...!


IT'S JUST A GUT INSTINCT RIGHT NOW...
WE CAN'T DISRUPT TONIGHT'S MEETING ON THAT ALONE.

IF THE SPIES ARE PLANNING TO MAKE A MOVE...
...IT'LL DEFINITELY BE ON A NIGHT WHEN TOKIWA-SAN IS ABSENT.

HAAH...
NOT THAT I MIND SPLITTING UP TO GET THE INFO WE NEED...
...BUT FOR MY OWN PEACE OF MIND, I'D HAVE PREFERRED PAIRING WITH OHMA.
WELL, EXCUSE ME.

KOTSU (TOK)
...THIS IS TOKIWA'S OFFICE.


...THE FORMER IS THE BETTER CHOICE, IF YOU ASK ME.
...AND THE OTHER MIGHT SELL ME OUT TO THE ENEMY...
IF ONE OF YOU CAN'T PULL OFF ANOTHER COVER-UP...
MM, THIS CANDY'S SWEET.
PAY ATTEN-TION.

IF HE GETS CAUGHT IN A BAD SPOT AGAIN, HE'S A GONER.
OHMA ALREADY SHIELDED YOU FROM KIKUSAKA AND SETSU ONCE...

EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE ALREADY SOLD US OUT ONCE?
I THINK YOU'RE IN BETTER HANDS STICKING WITH ME.

UN-LOCK!
カチリ
KACHIRI (CLICK)
GACHA (KACHAK)
WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO WASTE, YOU KNOW.
... STUPID ...
KYORO (GLANCE)
KYORO
NOW... ...WHERE TO START LOOKING ...
KIKU-SAKA AND SETSU WILL BE ON THEIR GUARD ...
...THAT TOKIWA'S ABSENCE IS A SPY'S CHANCE TO STRIKE.
WE WON'T BE THE ONLY ONES WHO FIGURE OUT...
HAAH...
AHH, NO, NO. GOOD-NESS.
YOU REALLY DO NEED A LOT OF HAND-HOLD-ING.
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU WON'T TELL US ANY-THING.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY...
...BUT I HAVEN'T PINNED DOWN THAT KAMI-GURA YET!
SECURITY'S TOO TIGHT
IF WE DELAY, WE'RE SURE TO BE DIS-COVERED.

THE PRIZE ...
...WON'T BE FOUND BY JUST WANDERING THE ROOM.
KON CTNKO
KON
KON
KON
KON
GAKO OKLINK)
THE KAMI-GURA IS BACK THERE.
封
GO (UMBL)
GO
GO

THIS PLACE BOOBY-TRAPPED OR SOME-THING?
...
...OF ALL OF KAMU-HABURI'S RELICS.
AN ULTRA-TOP-SECRET RECORD ...
...KNOWS THE SPELL THAT UNDOES THIS FENCE.
JUUU (SIZZLE)
ONLY TOKI-WA...
IF IT TAKES YOU HOURS, KIKUSAKA AND SETSU WILL CATCH YOU.
MACH !?
YOU'D BETTER DO IT AT MACH SPEED.
HUH !?
...SO... ...GOOD LUCK FIGURING IT OUT.
UM, COULD YOU NOT IGNORE MY CRIES OF DE-SPAIR?
TRANS-PORT YOURSELF DIRECTLY TO MY OFFICE, IF YOU WOULD.
IF YOU SUCCEED, DON'T LEAVE BY THE DOOR.
C-CAN I EVEN DO THIS ...?
...I'LL STAND OUTSIDE THE ROOM TO STALL KIKUSAKA AND SETSU.
WHILE YOU STEAL THE KAMI-GURA...
THIS DOOR... ...WILL NEED TO BE LOCKED FROM THE OUTSIDE TO MAINTAIN THE CHARADE.

...
URRGH
...
I GUESS I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE...

WELL. I WON'T BE able TO HOLD THEM UP FOR LONG...
GIIIII (CREAK)
HEY! WAI—
...SO PLEASE DO TRY TO WRAP IT UP QUICKLY.
HAVE A GOOD FIGHT.
G-CHAN (KACHNK)

...
OH?
KA-NADE.

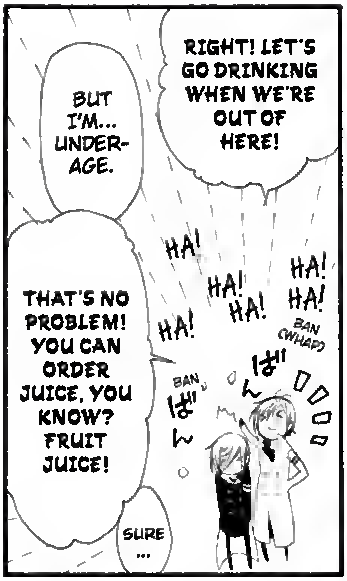
KACHIRI (CLICK)
LOCKED.

PATAN (SHUT)

KOTSU (TOK)
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
TOKIWA-SAN IS AWAY TONIGHT.
HERE AL-READY ...
OH, IS THAT SO?
NO WONDER THE DOOR'S LOCKED.
I WANTED TO DISCUSS THE RETRIEVAL OF RELICS FROM THE REGION ASSIGNED TO UNIT SIX...
THAT'S TOO BAD.
WOW... ON TOP OF THE REPORT EXPOSING UNIT FOUR'S CAPTAIN AS A SPY? HOW OVER-ZEALOUS.
YOU KNOW, I'D BE SNOOPING AROUND TOKIWA-SAN'S OFFICE WHILE HE WAS OUT...
...IF I WERE A SPY.
AH HA HA HA HA!
MY, HOW WICKED.
TON (THMP)
...I HAVE TO ASK...
... REALLY ...
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

GUGU (SQUEEZE)
...THAT'S THE LAST ONE.
HE'S BURNING HIS BRIDGES.
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
OKAY.
THAT SHOULD DO IT FOR THE GUARDS HERE.
DOSA (WHUMP)
TON (PAT)
LET'S GET THIS DONE WHILE SHE'S BUYING US TIME.
...A SIGNAL FROM KANADE.
KIKUSAKA AND SETSU ARE WITH HER WHEREVER SHE IS.
AND HERE I AM, SCARED OUT OF MY WITS
HAAH...
...!
PIPI (BEEP)

UN-LOCK IMPE-RIAL EDICT!
BAM
BAM
WHOA...
COPY-ING ALL THESE FILES...
IT'LL TAKE A LITTLE WHILE.
IT'S GONNA TAKE AT LEAST TEN MIN-UTES...
5%
7%
WIIN (WHIRR)
COPY
1 / 100%
Number of files
GA (GRAB)
WAH!
SO HOW'S IT FEEL?
GETTING OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DAYS?
UH, GOOD...?
IS THIS A PRISON?


RIGHT! LET'S GO DRINKING WHEN WE'RE OUT OF HERE!
BUT I'M... UNDER-AGE.
THAT'S NO PROBLEM! YOU CAN ORDER JUICE, YOU KNOW? FRUIT JUICE!
SURE...
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
BAN (WHAP)
BAN
ばん
ばん

I DO GET SOME TIME AWAY FROM HERE FAIRLY OFTEN ON MISSIONS OR TO RELAX...
...BUT BEING SET FREE FEELS DIFFERENT.
I'M GETTING REST-LESS.

...WHAT A WEIRDO.

PASH! (SLAP)
I'M VERY SAD.

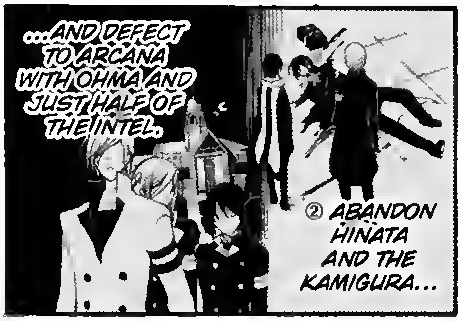
...MY...
...I TAKE IT YOU TWO SUSPECT ME OF BEING A SPY?

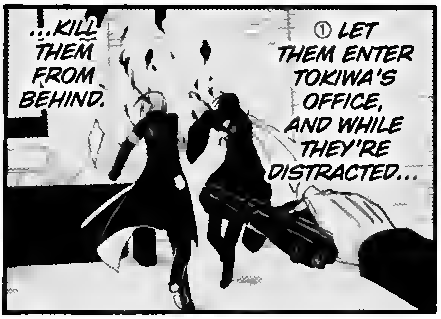
HE MUST STILL BE IN THE MIDDLE OF BREAKING PAST THE SECURITY...
IT HASN'T BEEN LONG SINCE HINATA WENT INSIDE...
...NNGH...
I'VE BEEN TRYING ALL THE SPELLS I KNOW, BUT...
...IT'S.....
...NOT BUDGING AN INCH.....

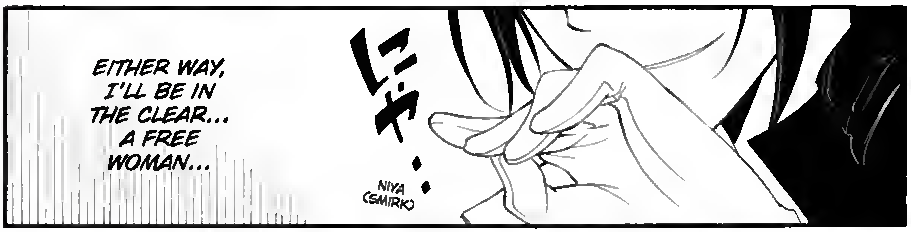
...!
...IF WE CHECK TOKIWA-SAN'S OFFICE?
...IF YOU'VE NOTHING TO HIDE, YOU WON'T MIND...
...WELL, THEN...
...YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS ARE SUSPECT.
I APOLOGIZE IF YOU ARE INDEED INNOCENT, BUT...
SU (SHFF)

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!!
YOU TWO...
...ACCUSE ME OF BEING A SPY, BUT...
DON (SHOVE)
...WHAT IF IT'S ACTUALLY YOU WHO ARE THE SPIES?
HUH?
ARE YOU USING ME AS A PRETEXT TO RAID TOKIWA-SAN'S OFFICE...
...AND STEAL KAMU-HABURI SECRETS?
BA (BLOCK)
I CAN'T LET YOU INSIDE IF THAT'S THE CASE.
...HEY...
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
OH DEAR... ARE YOU FEELING INSULTED?
HOW ODD...
...CON-SIDERING I'M JUST REPAYING IN KIND.

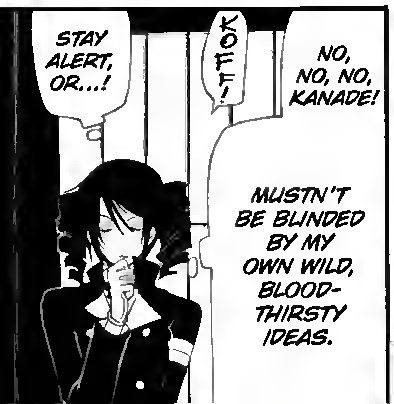
...THE BEST PLAN FOR GETTING OUT OF THIS SITUATION...


...AND DEFECT TO ARCANA WITH OHMA AND JUST HALF OF THE INTEL.
② ABANDON HINATA AND THE KAMIGURA...


...KILL THEM FROM BEHIND.
① LET THEM ENTER TOKIWA'S OFFICE, AND WHILE THEY'RE DISTRACTED...


EITHER WAY, I'LL BE IN THE CLEAR... A FREE WOMAN...
ニヤ・・
NIYA (SMIRK)

GASP!
...OOPS.


STAY ALERT, OR...!
KOFF!
NO, NO, NO, KANADE!
MUSTN'T BE BLINDED BY MY OWN WILD, BLOOD-THIRSTY IDEAS.

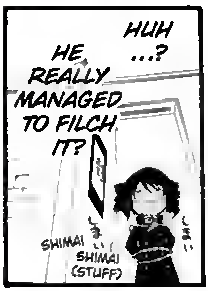
XYLIN (SWOON)
AH...!
HOW STIM-ULAT-ING! ♡

KIKU-SAKA-SAN, THE KEY!
RIGHT.
NOOO!
DAMN YOU!!
KACHIRI (CLICK)
GYURU (WRAP)
GOT-CHA.
BAN (SLAM)

GEE ...
I TOLD YOU I WASN'T UP TO ANY-THING.
...!
WELL... REVISITING MY EARLIER OPTIONS...
SLURP
—HINATA'S IN THERE.
KON
KON
KON
THAT HASN'T BEEN DISPROVEN QUITE YET.
WHAT ABOUT THE INNER ROOM?
KON (TNK)
③ LET THEM FIND HINATA AND, WHILE THEY'RE ALL FIGHTING, SHOOT THEM IN THE BACKS!
GIII (CREAK)
NOW, HINATA, IF YOU WOULD...
KACHIRI (CKA-CLIK)
カチリ
THEN I'LL BE FREE...

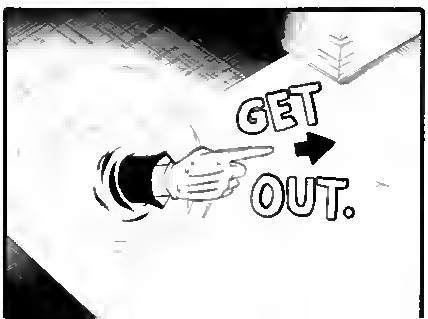
...DISTR...

...ACT...?
NOTH-ING'S ...
... GOING ON...?


HUH ...?
HE REALLY MANAGED TO FILCH IT?
SHIMAI SHIMAI (STUFF)

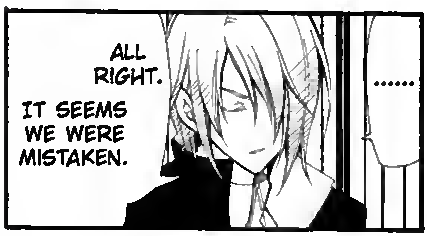
HM?

... WHA ...?
A HAND?

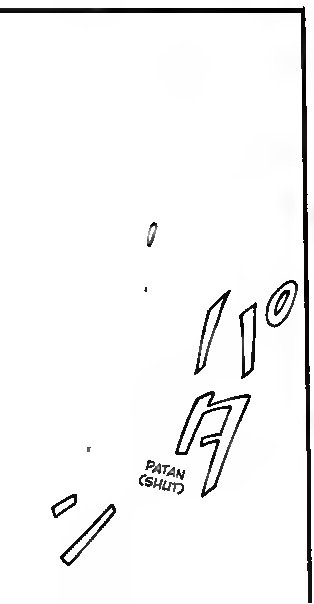

GET
OUT.

BUT...THE KAMIGURA'S STILL THERE ...?
... ZU ZU ZUZU (WHMM)

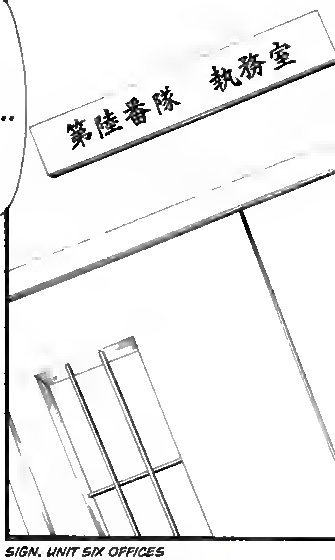
LEAVE!
SHUT THE DOOR AND GET OUT OF HERE!!
.....
...L...


ALL RIGHT.
IT SEEMS WE WERE MISTAKEN.
.....

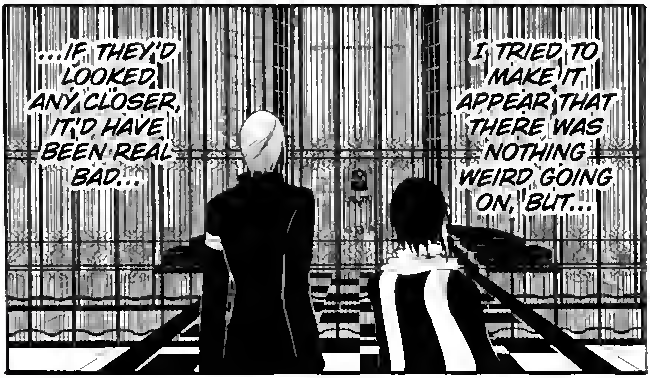
O...
...OPENING THIS SPACE WITHOUT TOKIWA-SAN'S PERMISSION...
...IS A SERIOUS VIOLATION...!

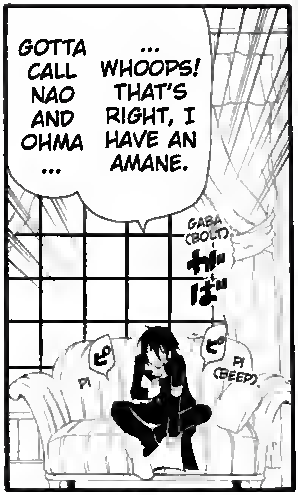

PATAN (SHUT)

WHEW
I'LL REPLACE THE SEAL...
...AND AWAIT TOKIWA-SAN'S RETURN.
GIGI
GIGI (CREAK)
LET'S ALL...
...GET OUT OF HERE.



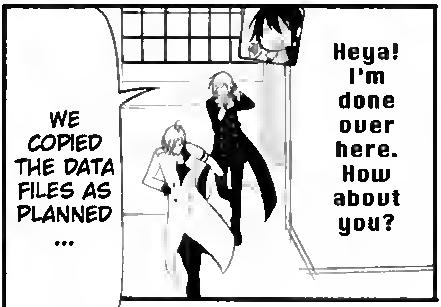
SIGN. UNIT SIX OFFICES

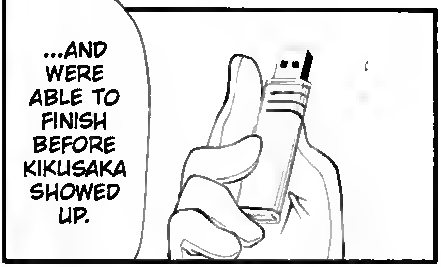


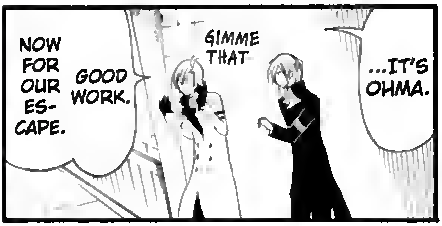

GOTTA CALL NAO AND OHMA ...
... WHOOPS! THAT'S RIGHT, I HAVE AN AMANE.
GABA (BOLT)
PI
PI (BEEP)

I MANAGED TO LIFT THE KAMIGURA.
ALL FOR THIS ...

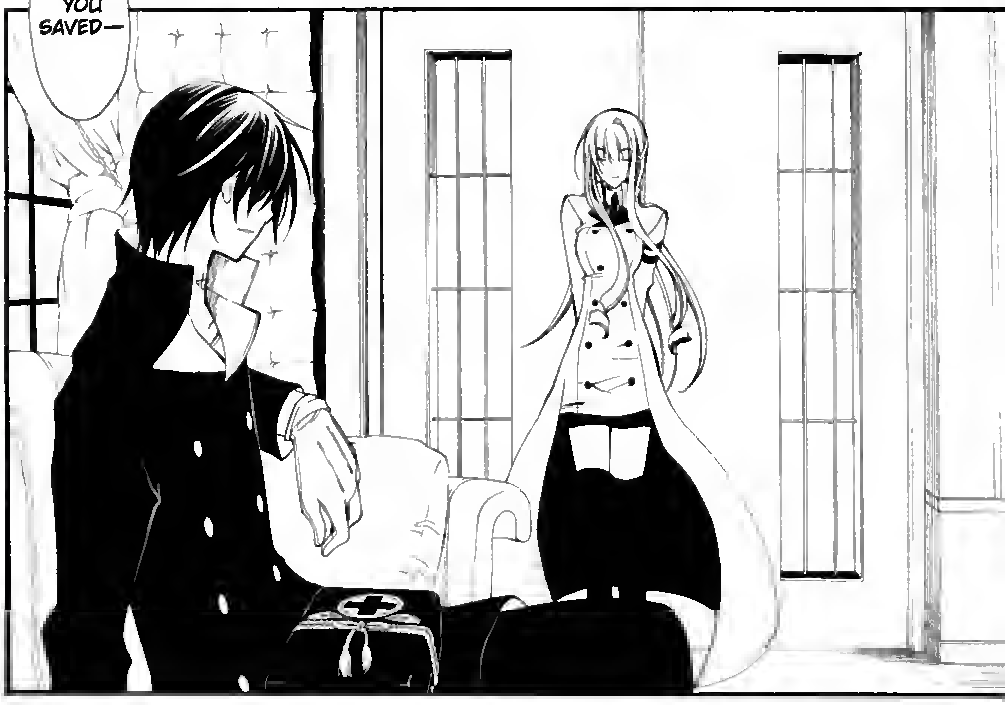
LET'S MEET UP IN THE COURTYARD.
WE'LL OPEN THE EXIT PORTAL THERE.


WE COPIED THE DATA FILES AS PLANNED ...
Heya! I'm done over here. How about you?


...AND WERE ABLE TO FINISH BEFORE KIKUSAKA SHOWED UP.


NOW FOR OUR ESCAPE.
GOOD WORK.
GIMME THAT
...IT'S OHMA.

That's what I told Kanade before.
GOT IT.
I'LL BRING TSUKIMIYA TO THE COURT-YARD.
PI (BEEP)
PATAN (SHUT)
KA-NADE ?
THANKS FOR EARLIER.


YOU SAVED—

GOOD EVE-NING.
I'D HEARD THERE WERE STILL SPIES WITHIN KAMU-HABURI.
THAT'D BE YOU, RIGHT?

...!

...OH, SEE, I HEARD YOU WERE APPOINTED CAPTAIN OR SOMETHING?
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE IN BAD SHAPE, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE TREATING YOU WELL.
YEAH, YOU!
ME?
PERFECT TIMING!
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO GO LOOK FOR YOU!!
TSU-
BA (LEAD)
TSUKI-MIYA!
LET'S GO.
WE'RE LEAVING KAMU-HABURI.
DAMMIT, THERE'S NO TIME TO CHIT-CHAT.
—ER, WELL, ANY-WAY ...
WAIT.
FIRST ...

...
HANG ON.

GATA (THUNK)

...I MEAN, I DON'T WANNA STOP, BUT...
...WE REALLY ARE IN A HUGE RUSH!
THE OTHERS ARE WAITING FOR US OUT... SIDE...

WHA ...?
OH... WHAT'S THE MATTER?
FEELING WEAK FROM THE BLOOD LOSS?
YOUR ENDLESS PRANKS ...
...ARE FINALLY GETTING YOU INTO TROUBLE.
TSUKI-MIYA ...?
TSU (TRICKLE)
GOTO OKUNIKO
I'LL TAKE BACK...
...THE KAMI-GURA YOU STOLE.
DE-CODING YOUR BLOOD ...
...I CAN SEE YOU TRULY ARE AN ARCANA SPY.
PERO (LICK)
...HEY.
WILL YOU QUIT KIDDING AROUND AL-READY?
OR DID YOU AC-TUALLY SWITCH ALLE-GIANCES ?
MY...
WHAT AN ODD THING TO SAY.

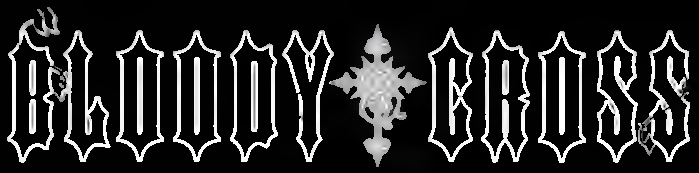
"SWITCH" ALLEGIANCE? I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PART OF KAMU-HABURI.
I AM THE CURRENT CAPTAIN OF UNIT FOUR.
OH, AND BY THE WAY...
...I THINK YOU MUST BE MISTAKING ME FOR SOMEONE ELSE.
THIS...
...IS OUR FIRST MEETING.
—WHAT THE HELL?

...SHE'S... BEEN BRAIN-WASHED?
KIKU-SAKA, DO YOU COPY?
I'VE CAPTURED ONE SPY ALIVE IN THE UNIT SIX OFFICE.
AMNESIA?
.....OR...
(BEEP)
AND I'VE RECOV-ERED THE KAMI-GURA.
PLEASE LET TOKIWA-SAN KNOW.
... ALSO ...
...THE OTHERS ...
...ARE PLANNING TO FLEE VIA THE COURT-YARD.
THERE ARE THREE SPIES.
OFFICERS OHMA AND KANADE ARE AMONG THEM.

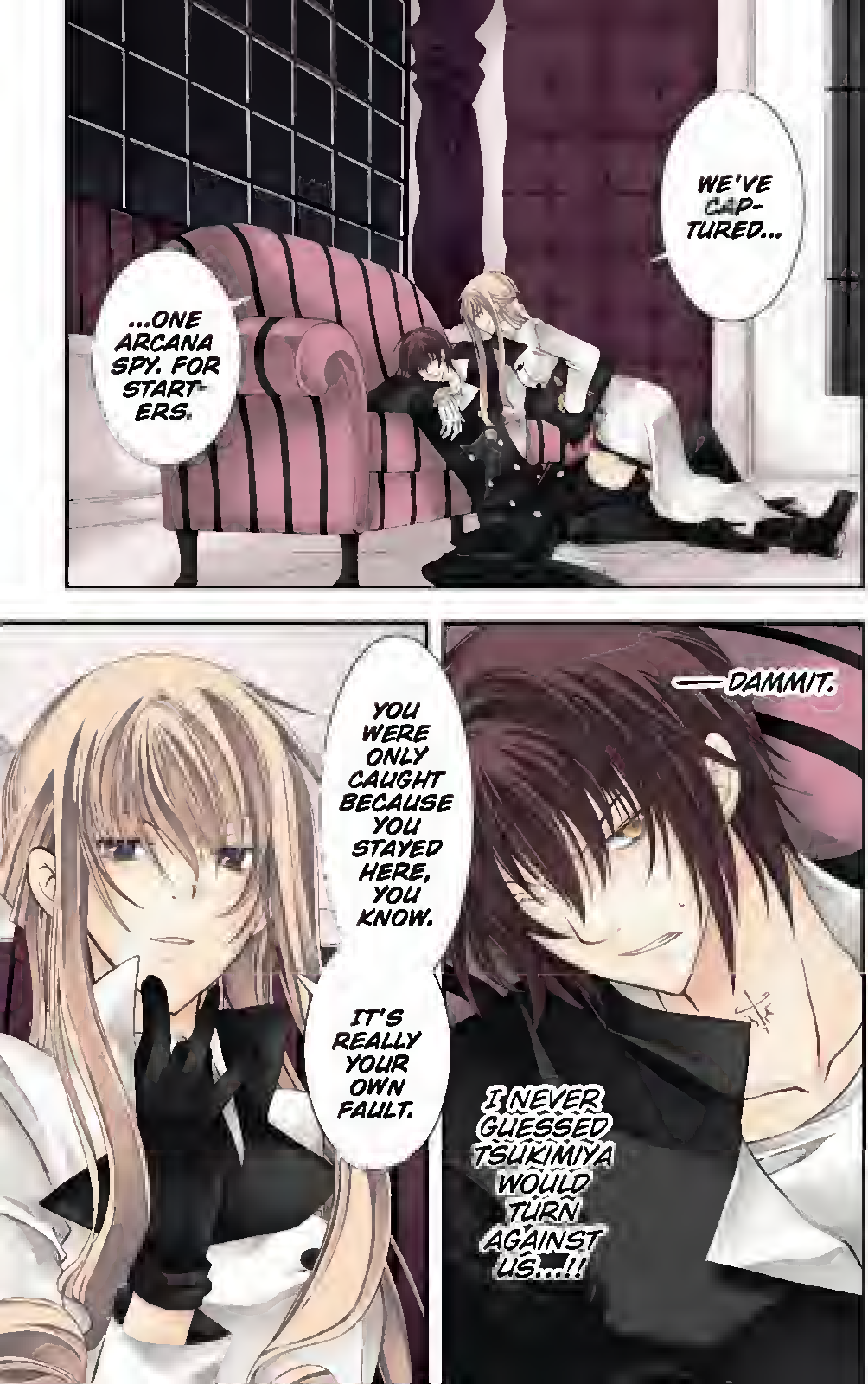
...I BLEW IT.
THEY DON'T KNOW YET...
TO BE EXPOSED BY TSUKIMIYA AT THE VERY END...!
...THAT THEY'VE BEEN FOUND OUT.

GIRI (GRIT)
AT THIS RATE...
...ALL OUR EFFORTS WILL BE FOR NOTHING... NO...
THEY'LL BE EASY TO TAKE DOWN.

...WORSE THAN THAT, THIS COULD BE THE END FOR US!
BE SURE ...
...TO EXECUTE EVERY ONE OF THEM.


BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

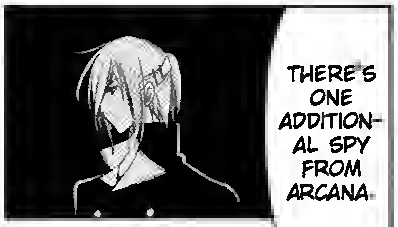

WE'VE CAP-TURED...
...ONE ARCANA SPY. FOR START-ERS.
—DAMMIT.
I NEVER GUESSED TSUKIMIYA WOULD TURN AGAINST US...!!
YOU WERE ONLY CAUGHT BECAUSE YOU STAYED HERE, YOU KNOW.
IT'S REALLY YOUR OWN FAULT.

Chapter 33
Praying for Snakes to Befall Traitors

Chapter 33
Praying for Snakes to Befall Traitors

BLOODY CROSS

BATA (STOMP)
BATA
BATA
BATA


THERE'S ONE ADDITIONAL SPY FROM ARCANA.

I'VE CONFIRMED THAT THE LAST TWO...
...ARE KAMUHABURI TRAITORS, OFFICERS KANADE AND OHMA.

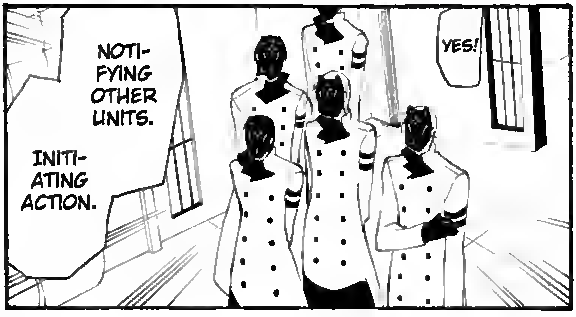
ZAWA (MURMUR)

...THERE ARE FOUR ENEMIES IN ALL.
I'VE ALREADY DETAINED ONE HERE.

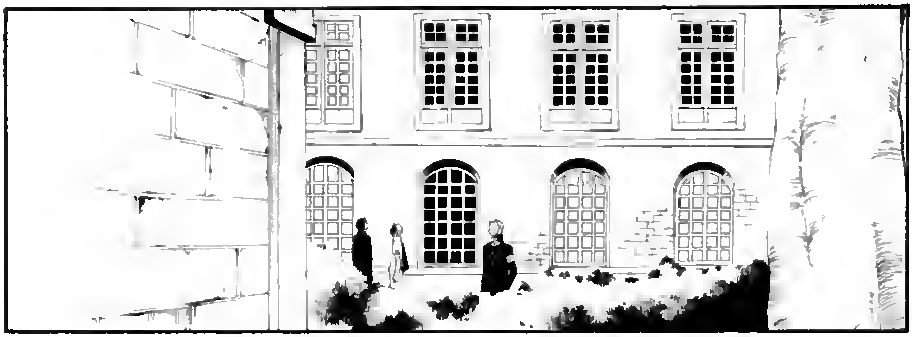
WE'LL SURROUND THEM AND ELIMINATE THEM.
ALSO ... ...THEY DON'T KNOW THAT WE'RE ON TO THEM YET.

THE SPIES PLAN TO ESCAPE THROUGH THE COURT-YARD.

ALL UNITS REMAINING AT HEAD-QUARTERS ARE ORDERED TO MOBILIZE.
I HEREBY AUTHORIZE TRAITOR EXECUTION AS ALLOWED BY REGULA-TIONS.


NOTI-FYING OTHER UNITS.
INITI-ATING ACTION.
YES!

AND YOU...
YOU'LL ALSO BE EXECUTED WHEN TOKIWA-SAN RETURNS.
AFTER HE'S INTERROGATED YOU TO HIS SATISFACTION.
GIRI (GRIT)

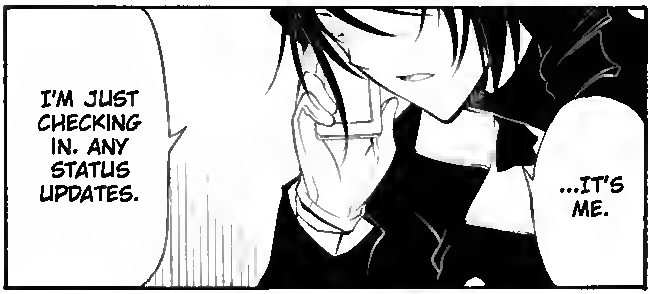


WELL...
IF WE PRETEND WE'RE ON A MISSION, WE SHOULD BE FINE, BUT...
GASA (RUSTLE)

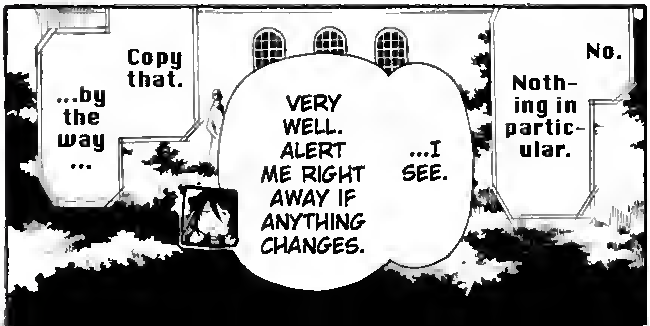
...WE'RE NOT FAR FROM THE COURTYARD, BUT...
...THERE ARE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.

KYORO (GLANCE)
...HINATA HASN'T SHOWN UP?
KA-NADE!
!
...YOU GOT HERE FIRST.
OH...

IF HE HASN'T ARRIVED YET... HE MIGHT HAVE RUN INTO TROUBLE.
I LOANED HIM MY AMANE, BUT THERE'S NO ANSWER WHEN I CALL.
?
IS SOME-THING WRONG?


I'M JUST CHECKING IN. ANY STATUS UPDATES.
...IT'S ME.

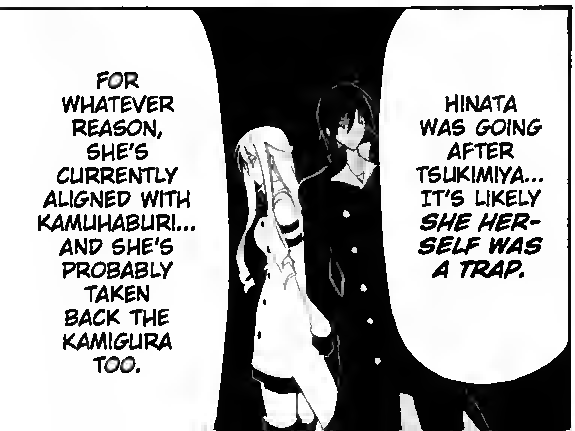
GIVE ME A MINUTE.
PI (BEEP) PI
I'LL CALL MY UNIT AND FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON.

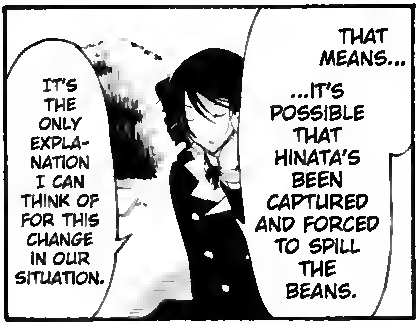

...by the way ...
Copy that.
VERY WELL. ALERT ME RIGHT AWAY IF ANYTHING CHANGES.
...I SEE.
No.
Noth-ing in partic-ular.

...where are you calling from, Captain?

IT SEEMS TO ME...
...THAT THEY'RE QUIETLY TRYING TO DO A SEARCH FOR US.
!

DID THEY SAY ANY-THING?
.....
HE WANTED TO KNOW WHERE I WAS.
BUTSU (BOOP)


HINATA WAS GOING AFTER TSUKIMIYA... IT'S LIKELY *SHE HER-SELF WAS A TRAP.*
FOR WHATEVER REASON, SHE'S CURRENTLY ALIGNED WITH KAMUHABURI... AND SHE'S PROBABLY TAKEN BACK THE KAMIGURA TOO.

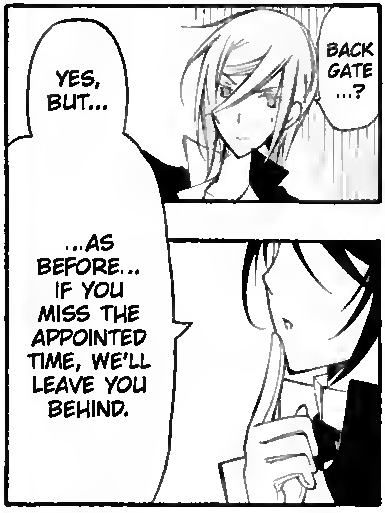

THAT MEANS...
...IT'S POSSIBLE THAT HINATA'S BEEN CAPTURED AND FORCED TO SPILL THE BEANS.
IT'S THE ONLY EXPLA-NATION I CAN THINK OF FOR THIS CHANGE IN OUR SITUATION.

I CONSIDERED THAT MYSELF... BUT THE INFORMATION FROM THE BASEMENT ALONE...
...WON'T BE SUFFICIENT ENOUGH A GIFT TO MOLLIFY ARCANA.
SHE DEDUCED ALL THAT FROM THOSE FEW WORDS ...?
SO WHAT NOW?
FORGET THE KAMIGURA AND FLEE TO ARCANA?
...IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
WE MUST ALTER OUR PLAN.
YOU GO RESCUE HINATA IN THE MEANTIME, NAO.
HUH !?
OHMA AND I...
...WILL RETRIEVE THE KAMIGURA.

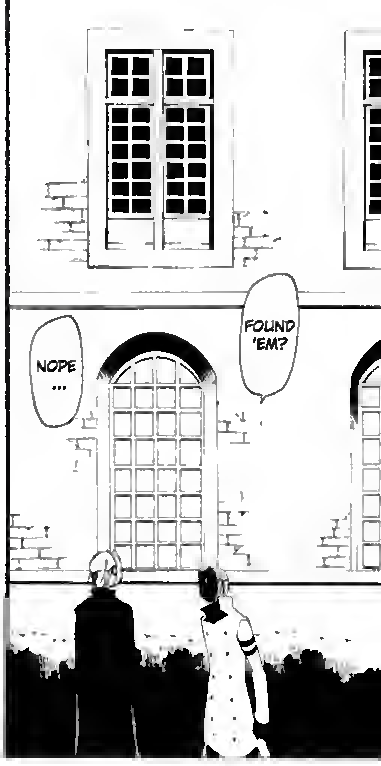
WE MIGHT WANT TO CHANGE OUR RENDEZ-VOUS POINT.
...HMM.
...THAT COURT-YARD... ...IS BEING WATCHED.
WHY ME!?
HE'S YOUR FRIEND, ISN'T HE?
HIM!?

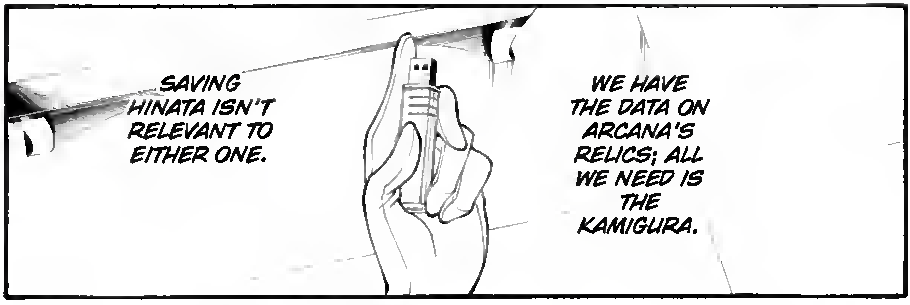
IT BECOMES A NARROW PATH OVER THERE, SO EVEN IF WE'RE DISCOVERED, WE CAN'T BE SWARMED.
...ALL RIGHT, THEN.
WE'LL RECONVENE AN HOUR FROM NOW AT THE BACK GATE.

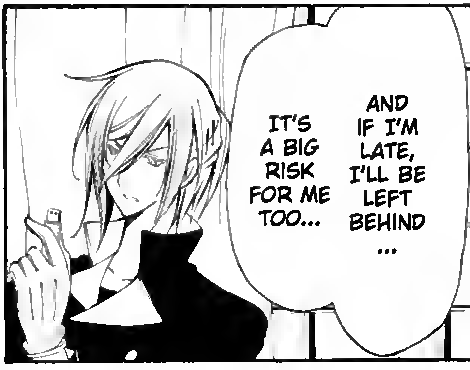
BE SURE...
...TO BE PUNC-TUAL, OKAY?
BISHI (JAB)


BACK GATE ...?
YES, BUT...
...AS BEFORE... IF YOU MISS THE APPOINTED TIME, WE'LL LEAVE YOU BEHIND.

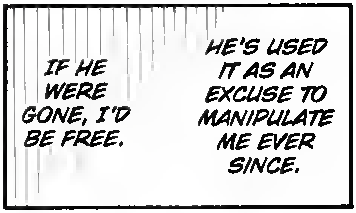
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING... WHY'S IT MY JOB TO SPRING HINATA?
HAAH ...

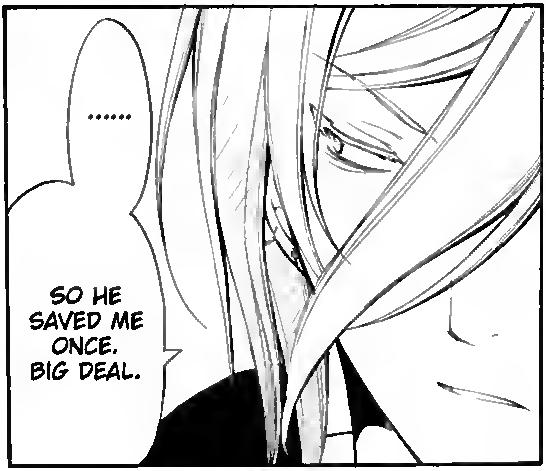

NOPE ...
FOUND 'EM?

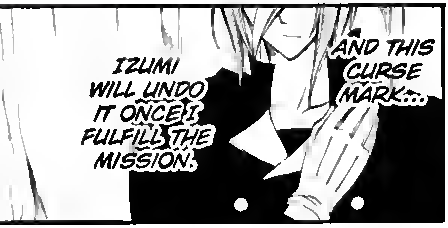

SAVING HINATA ISN'T RELEVANT TO EITHER ONE.
WE HAVE THE DATA ON ARCANA'S RELICS; ALL WE NEED IS THE KAMIGURA.

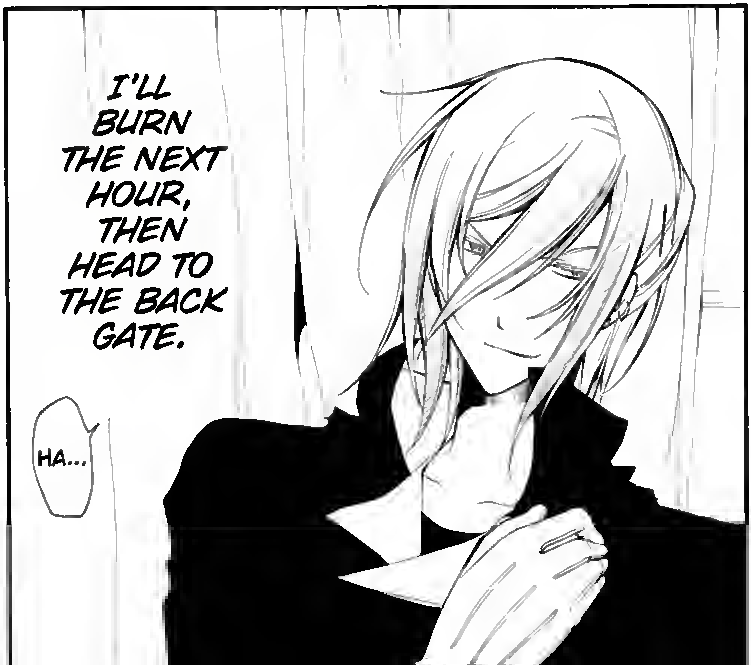

IT'S A BIG RISK FOR ME TOO...
AND IF I'M LATE, I'LL BE LEFT BEHIND ...

I'LL DO AS MUCH FIRST AID AS I CAN FOR NOW...
...BUT DON'T HAUNT ME IF YOU DON'T MAKE IT.
WHAT AN IDIOT.
IF HE'D HAD A LITTLE MORE NERVE, HE MIGHT HAVE FREED HIMSELF.


HE'S USED IT AS AN EXCUSE TO MANIPULATE ME EVER SINCE.
IF HE WERE GONE, I'D BE FREE.

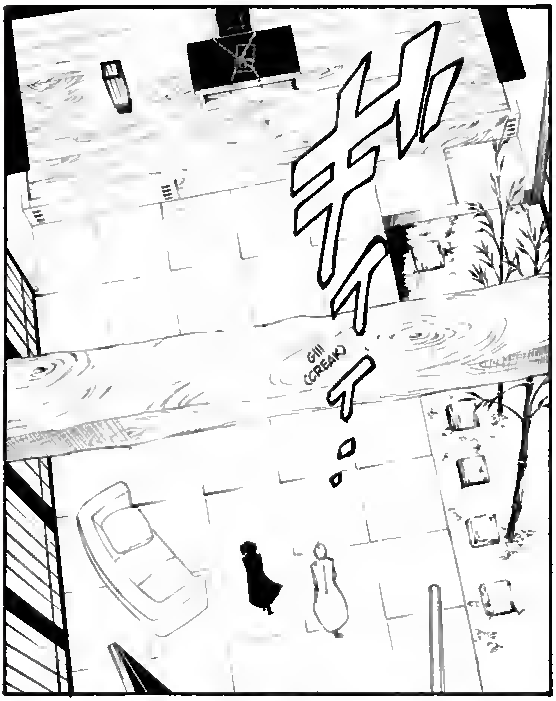

.....
SO HE SAVED ME ONCE. BIG DEAL.


AND THIS CURSE MARK...
IZUMI WILL UNDO IT ONCE I FULFILL THE MISSION.


I'LL BURN THE NEXT HOUR, THEN HEAD TO THE BACK GATE.
HA...

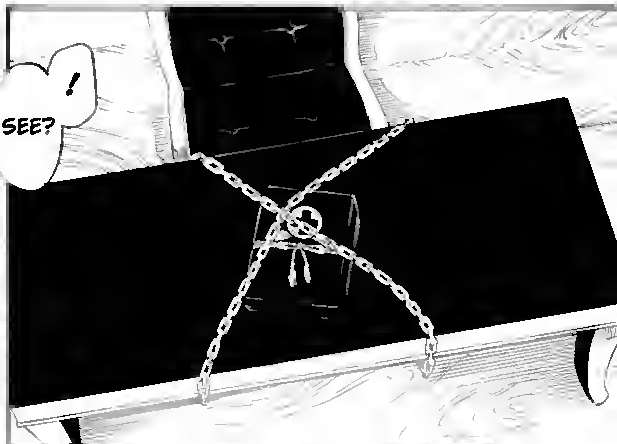
OR MAYBE IT'D BE SAFER TO JUST GO HIDE THERE NOW.
SUTA (STRIDE)
すた
SUTA
すた
LET'S DO IT.

.....
THE KAMI-GURA'S HERE?


GIII (CREAK)

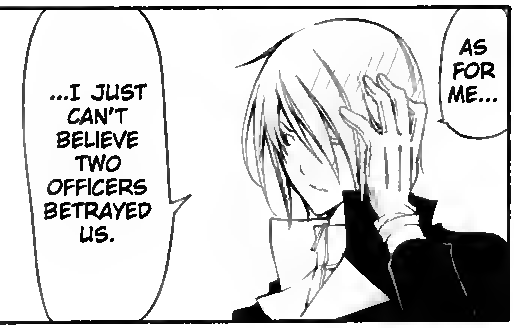
YES.
JUST IN CASE...
...I'D TOLD HINATA TO PUT A TRACKER ON THE KAMI-GURA.
PI (BEEP) PI
IT'S IN THIS ROOM, ALL RIGHT.

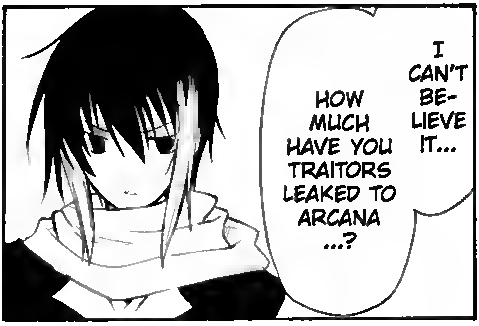
BINGO.

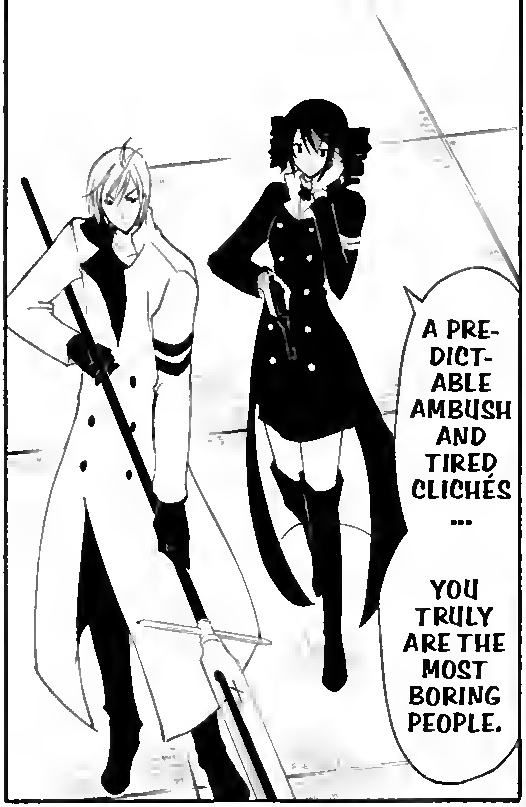

SEE?
!

...SO THERE WAS A TRACKER ON THE KAMI-GURA ...
KOTSU (TOK)
CHI

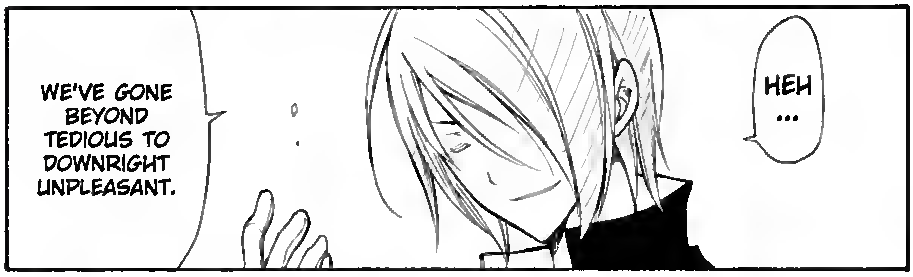
BYU (ZWISH)


AS FOR ME...
...I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE TWO OFFICERS BETRAYED US.


I CAN'T BE-LIEVE IT...
HOW MUCH HAVE YOU TRAITORS LEAKED TO ARCANA ...?


A PREDICTABLE AMBUSH AND TIRED CLICHÉS ...
YOU TRULY ARE THE MOST BORING PEOPLE.

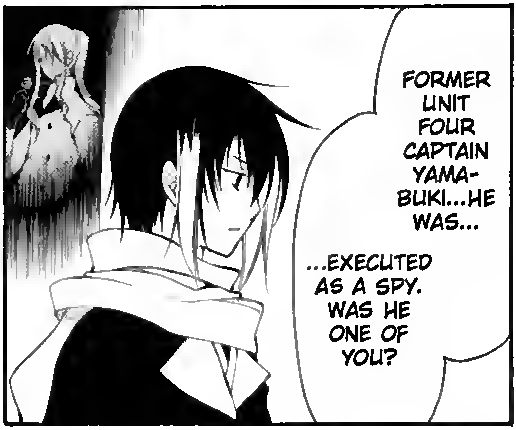
JA (GHAK)
SHAME ON YOU BOTH.


WE'VE GONE BEYOND TEDIOUS TO DOWNRIGHT UNPLEASANT.
HEH ...

(GAK) (GLANG)
DEALING WITH THE TWO OF YOU...!
BA (LEAP)

I DON'T CONSIDER YOU COMRADES ANYMORE.
I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS ABOUT EXECUTING YOU.
GIRI (GRIND)
YEAH ...?

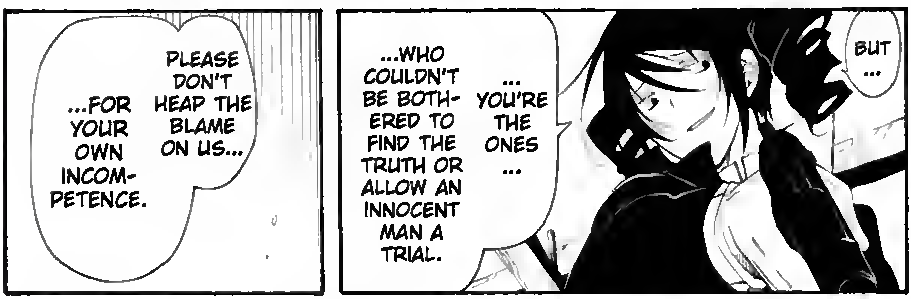
KA NADE-SAN...
...I'D... LIKE TO ASK YOU ONE QUES-TION.
OH? WHAT IS IT?

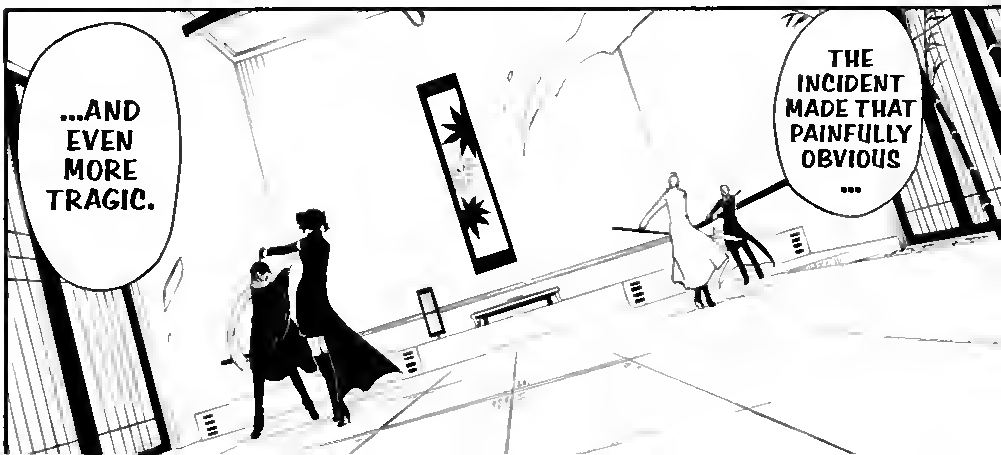

FORMER UNIT FOUR CAPTAIN YAMA-BUKI...HE WAS...
...EXECUTED AS A SPY. WAS HE ONE OF YOU?

AH, YAMA-BUKI?
NO...
HE WAS A DEVOTED AND LOYAL KAMU-HABURI CAPTAIN.

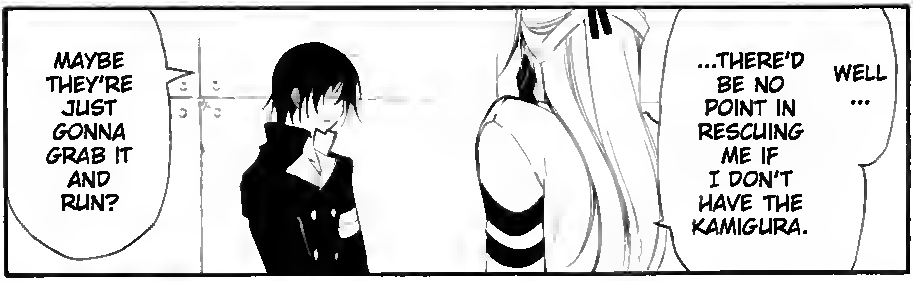
ドン
JA
GCHAK

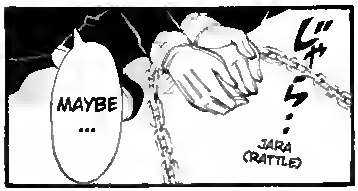
YOU DARE DISREGARD YOUR COMRADE'S LIFE...?

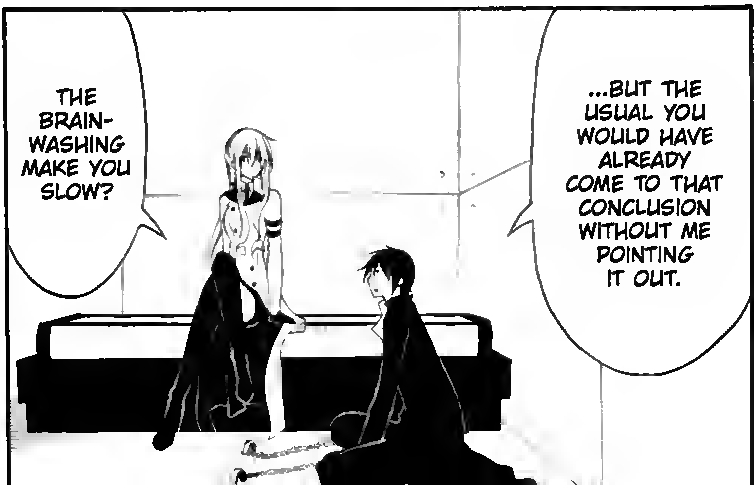

BUT ...
...YOU'RE THE ONES ...
...WHO COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO FIND THE TRUTH OR ALLOW AN INNOCENT MAN A TRIAL.
PLEASE DON'T HEAP THE BLAME ON US...
...FOR YOUR OWN INCOMPETENCE.


THE INCIDENT MADE THAT PAINFULLY OBVIOUS ...
...AND EVEN MORE TRAGIC.

SIGN: HOLDING CELL

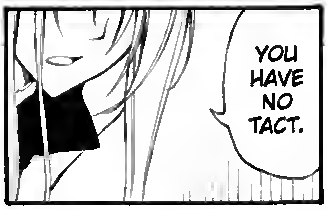






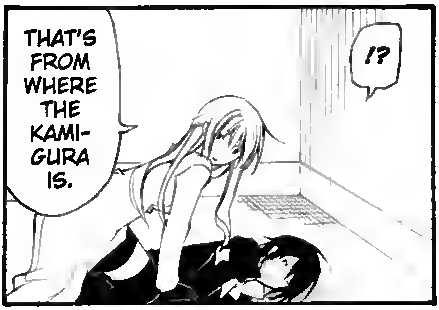
YOU REALLY WANT ME TO HURT YOU THAT BADLY?

GA (GLAND)


YOU HAVE NO TACT.

DOON (BOOM)

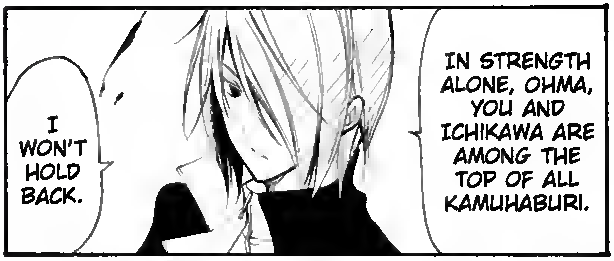
THEY'RE GETTING SOME ACTION. I'M JEALOUS.

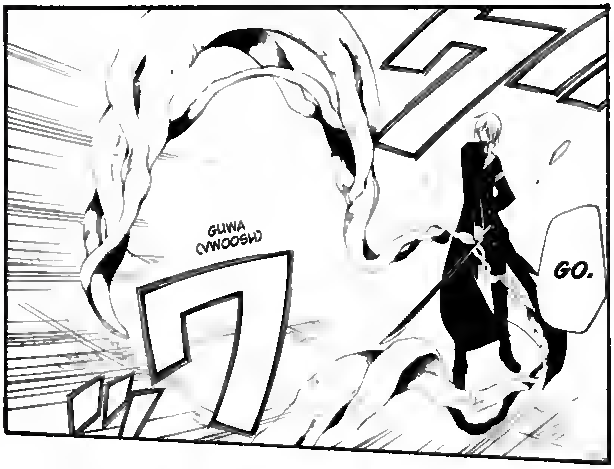

THAT'S FROM WHERE THE KAMI-GURA IS.
!?

DON
DON
DON
DON
YOU'RE LIKE A LITTLE MOUSE.
SCUR-RYING ABOUT ...
GASHO
GASHOONKO
JA
CHASHO
FEH.

HEE.
I DO SO LOVE FIRING GUNS! ♡

ZUGAGA (KARLAM)
NH ...!!


I WON'T HOLD BACK.
IN STRENGTH ALONE, OHMA, YOU AND ICHIKAWA ARE AMONG THE TOP OF ALL KAMUHABURI.


GUWA (VWOOSH)
GO.

IT SEEMS LIKE A STRAIGHT-FORWARD ATTACK USING THE RELIC'S VINES...
ZAZA (ZSWIIISH)

ZUZU (ZWSH)
DIVINE RELIC: HAZE.
FIRST FORM.

...YOU'VE PLANNED A NEAR-SIMULTA-NEOUS BLADE STRIKE FROM THE LEFT REAR.
...BUT IN TRUTH...

GU (WEDGE)

I KNOW YOU.
WAH!
DOKA (WHAK)

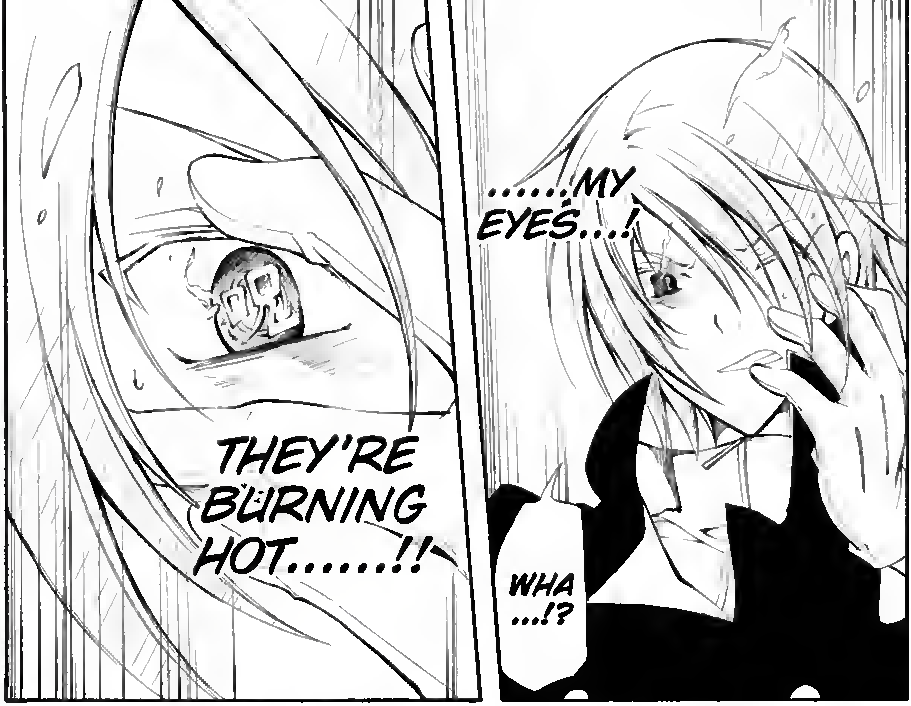
..."IN STRENGTH ALONE"?
I'M INSULT-ED.

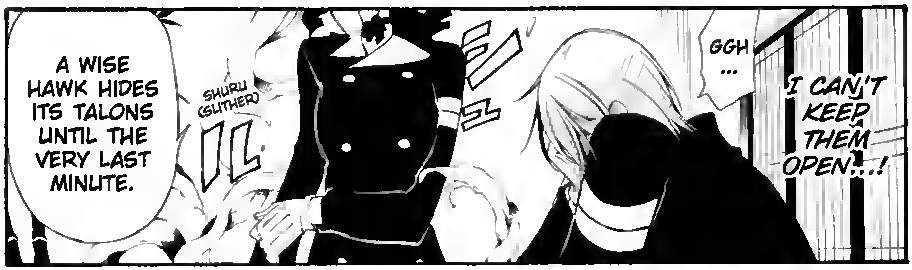
GO (WHOOSH)

UNIT THREE IS FRONT-LINE SPECIAL FORCES.
DON'T COMPARE US TO TOKIWA HANGERS-ON LIKE UNITS TWO AND FIVE.
WE HAVE EX-PERI-ENCE!
...HMPH.
YOU SHOULD NEVER UNDER-ESTIMATE UNIT TWO.
OUR ELITE SQUAD SPECIALIZES IN SINGLE-MAN COMBAT AGAINST MULTIPLE TARGETS.
HUH?
WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH—
AH!
GYURU (WRITHE)
HEY...!
HUH!?
GUWA (WWOOSH)
TCH...!

DAM-MIT... KANADE!
FROM THE BEGIN-NING...
...I WAS NEVER FIGHTING JUST YOU, OHMA.
PLEASE DON'T MOVE.
SU (SHWIP)
GIRI (GRIT)
...EVEN I COULD MANAGE TO KILL YOU.
EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT A CAPTAIN, AT THIS RANGE...
GH...
GUGU... (SQUEEZE)
...YOU SEE...
YOU EXCEL AT SCHEMING, YET YOU JUST CAME CHARGING IN. YOU'RE FINISHED.
KOTSU (TOK)
KOTSU
KA-NADE...
HAS YOUR TIME FINALLY COME?
...I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH FOR ANOTHER ASSAULT ...?
MISHI
MISHI (SQUEEZE)
...MY... YOU THINK...

...I HAPPEN TO HAVE A FEW SPECIAL SKILLS BEYOND SCHEMING. ♡
DO (DOOM)


.....MY EYES...!
WHA ...!?
THEY'RE BURNING HOT.....!!


A WISE HAWK HIDES ITS TALONS UNTIL THE VERY LAST MINUTE.
SHURU (GLITTER)
GGH ...
I CAN'T KEEP THEM OPEN...!

KIKU-SAKA-SAN—
!
HYU (WHOOSH)
THAT'S HOW...
...IT ENSURES IT WILL CAPTURE ITS PREY.

OKAY.
OHMA.
PLEASE DON'T KILL HIM YET, ALL RIGHT?

...TSK, TSK.
SHOW-ING AN OFFICER YOUR BACK?
GO (THUD)

WHAT WERE THOSE EYES...?
... DAMMIT.

HEE HEE.
WE'LL BE TAKING THE KAMIGU-RA.

...TO USE THESE EYES OF MINE.
...I HAVE TO GIVE YOU CREDIT FOR FORCING ME...
...BUT, SETSU ... KIKU-SAKA ...

...THE MOST HUMILIATING THING EVER.
IRON GRIP
HAVING PITY HEAPED ATOP YOU WHILE WATCHING THE KAMIGURA SNATCHED FROM RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU...
...HAS TO BE...
NORMALLY, I'D KILL YOU NOW...
...BUT I'LL MAKE A SPECIAL EXCEPTION.
ZA CHWOOSHO
RIGHT?
THRILLING! ♡
.....DAMMIT!!

SIGN: HOLDING CELL

AND I BET THEY'RE PLANNING TO ABAN-DON ME...
HAAH...
...BUT EVEN IF I DO FREE MYSELF, I CAN'T LEAVE KAMUHABURI HEADQUARTERS WITHOUT EITHER KANADE OR OHMA.

...TSUKI MIYA'S REPLACE-MENT, HUH.
KOTSU
KOTSU (TOK)
KOTSU

KASHA (KACHAK)
IT'S HOPE-LESS...

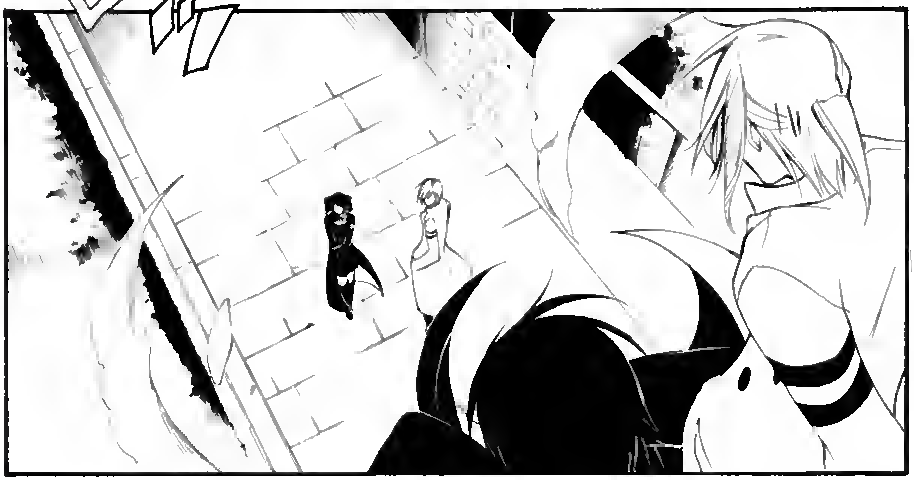
ちゃ
SUCHA (SHOOP)

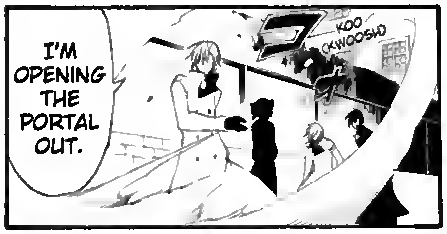
LAST TIME IT WAS DOODLING ALL OVER THE PURE-BLOOD'S FACE...
IS KAMU-HABURI STAFFED SOLELY BY FOOLS!?

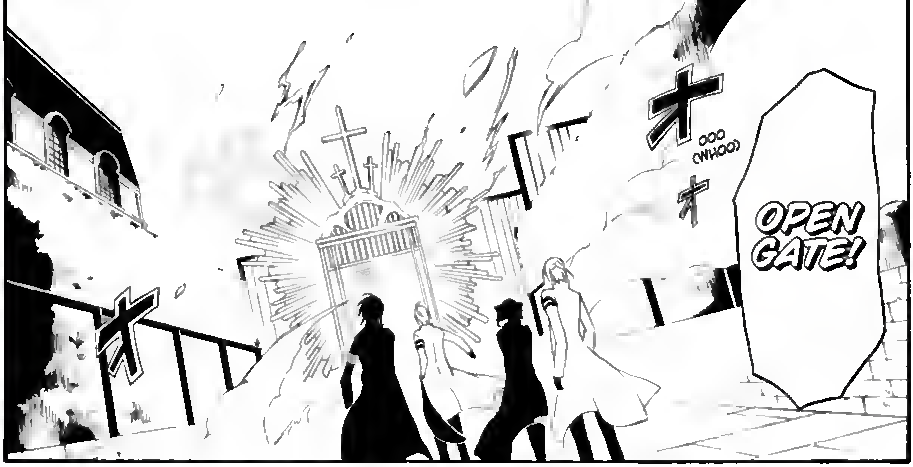
HEY, YOU!!
KASHA (SNAP)

BE QUIET!
THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING FOR HER TO SEE. THE OTHERS ARE LONG GONE.
WHA ...?
KASHAN (KLINK)
BY THE WAY, I'M THE ONE WHO CALLED TSUKI-MIYA AWAY TOO.
EH ...?
...THIS IS PAYBACK FOR MY DEBT TO YOU. WE'RE EVEN NOW.
WHA ...?
HUH ...?
I STOLE THE KEY
HUH ...?
PAKU (FLAP)
PAKU

SIGN: HOLDING CELL



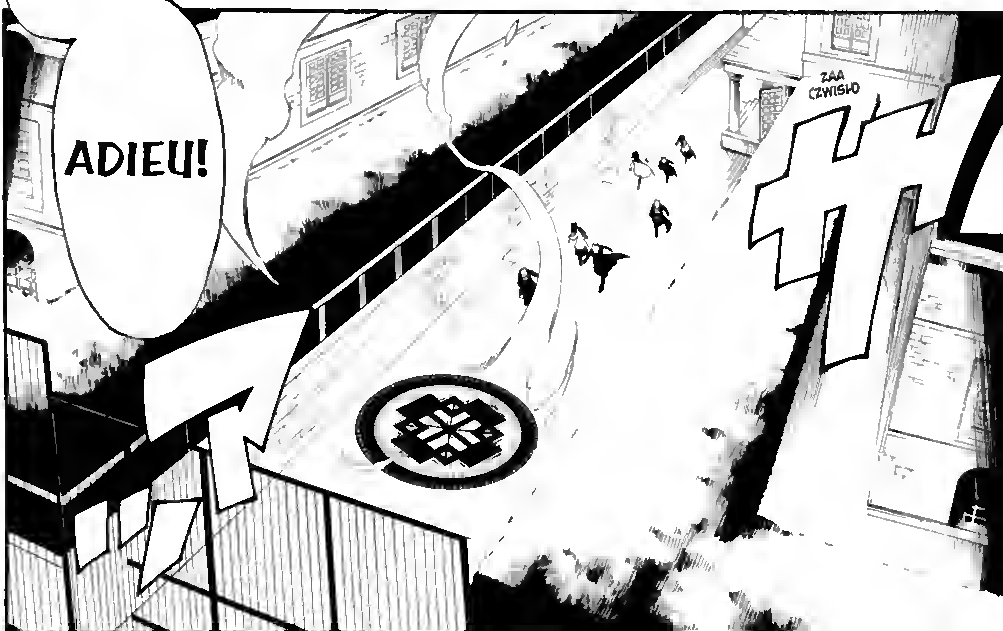



OPEN GATE!
OOO (OKHOO)

...WELL, KAMU-HABURI FOLKS ...
...THANKS FOR EVERY-THING.
OOOO

ZUPU (ZWUP)
OKAY, HURRY!

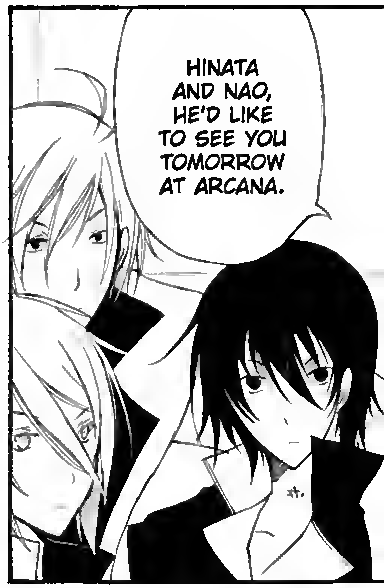
DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY!
OVER THERE!

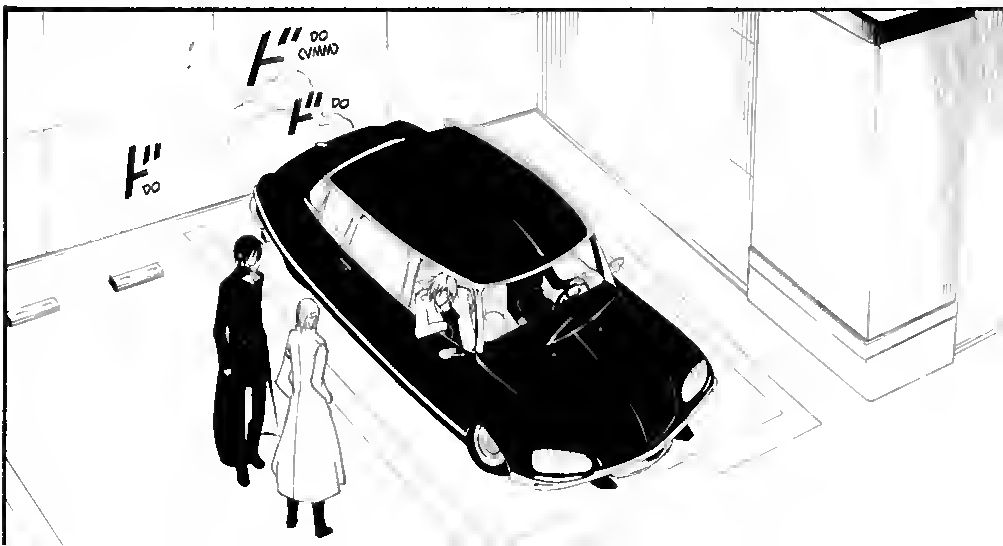

ADIEU!
ZAA (ZWISH)

DAMMIT, WE MADE IT!
I'M SOOO RE-LIEVED!
AHHH ...
IT'S OVER ...
WE'VE GOT THEM BOTH.
HA (GASP)
LOOK
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE KAMI-GURA AND THE RELIC DATA!?
!
HOW DRAMA-TIC.
WHOA, I'M NOT DREAMING, RIGHT?
PU (BOOP)
GA (GRAB)
WE'RE THE FIRST KAMU-HABURI MEM-BERS TO ESCAPE ...!!
IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOUR COOPER-ATION!

I'VE CONTACTED IZUMI.
HE WANTS THE KAMIGURA IMMEDIATELY.
OHMA AND I WILL GO DELIVER IT TO HIM.
DDD

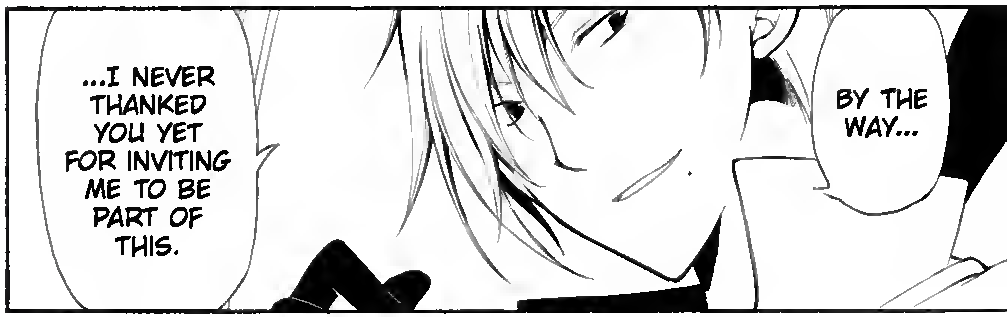
...GOOD WORK, ALL.
THIS IS...
...GOODBYE FOR NOW.
WHEW...


HINATA AND NAO, HE'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TOMORROW AT ARCANA.


ドドド

BURORO (VROOM)
SURE.
WELL ...
I'LL THANK YOU PROPERLY NEXT TIME.
HON-ESTLY ...
...I THOUGHT I WOULDN'T MAKE IT OUT.
.....
HAAH ...
NOTH-ING WE CAN DO FOR NOW.
BUT THERE'LL BE ANOTHER CHANCE SOMEDAY.
I CAUGHT SIGHT OF HER BRIEF-LY.
SHE'S BEEN BRAIN-WASHED, HASN'T SHE?
AND I REALLY WISH WE COULD'VE BROUGHT TSUKIMIYA TOO.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DAYS...
...SHALL WE GO HOME, THEN?

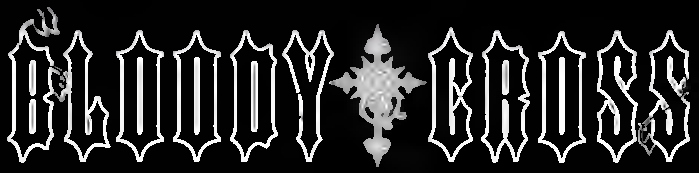
BURORO (VROOM)
...WE'VE MANAGED TO GET OUT.
IT STILL HASN'T SUNK IN THAT I'M FREE.
...IT WASN'T WITHOUT ITS BUMPS AND BRUISES, BUT...


...I NEVER THANKED YOU YET FOR INVITING ME TO BE PART OF THIS.
BY THE WAY...

GACHA (KA-CLICK)
カシャ

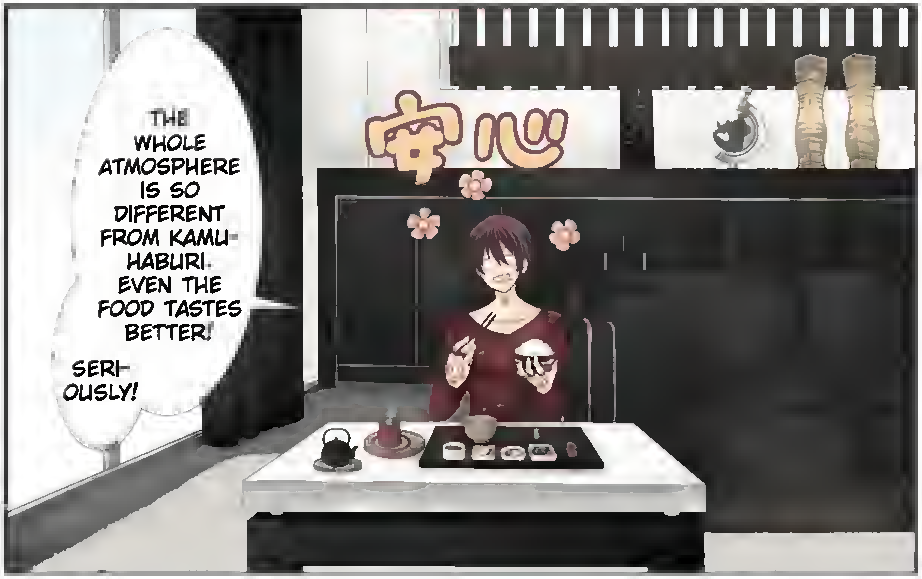
DON (BLAM)
WHAT ARE YOU—
... HEY ...
.....
YOU AND I BOTH ...
BOTA (DRIBBLE)
BOTA
...SOLD OUT THE ORGANI-ZATION WE'D SWORN ALLE-GIANCE TO.
AND PER-HAPS...
...YOU'RE EVEN A KAMU-HABURI SPY ONLY PRE-TENDING TO HAVE BE-TRAYED THEM.
GACHA (KACHAK)
KI (SKREE)
I CAN'T DISCOUNT THE CHANCE THAT YOU MIGHT SELL ME OUT ONE DAY TOO.
IT ONLY MAT-TERS ...
...THAT I ALLY WITH ARCANA ...
KOTSU (TOK)
KOTSU
...AND WIN MY FREEDOM.

HOW STIMU-LATING! ♡


BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

WAKING UP IN MY OWN HOME IS INCREDI-BLE!
9:27
...AHHH...


THE WHOLE ATMOSPHERE IS SO DIFFERENT FROM KAMU-HABURI. EVEN THE FOOD TASTES BETTER!
SERI-OUSLY!
安心

IT'S LIKE A HUGE WEIGHT OFF MY SHOUL-DERS...
WHAT A REFRESHING MORNING!

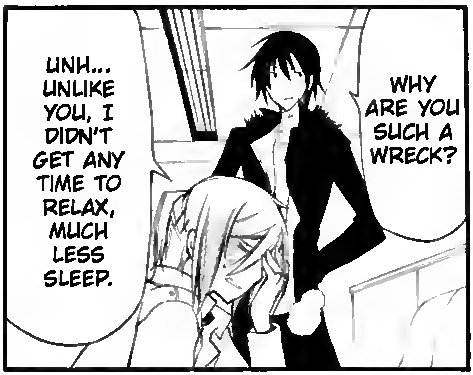
Chapter 34
Cruel Laughter

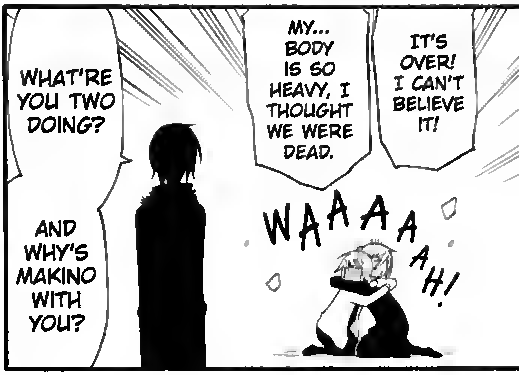
Chapter 34
Cruel Laughter

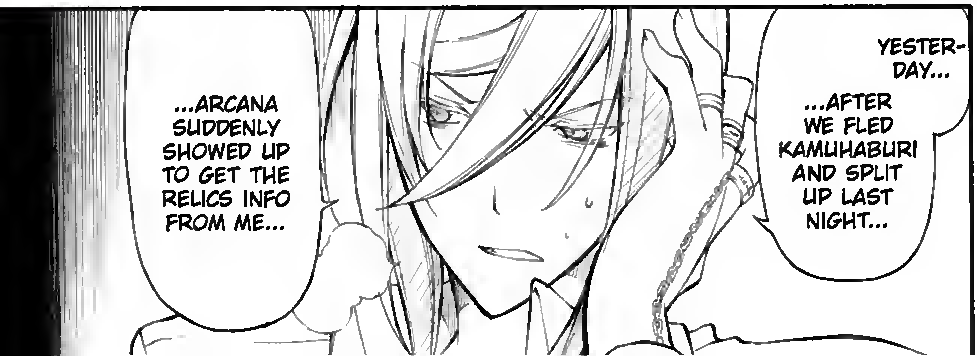
BLOODY CROSS

WHAT THE HELL IS NAO UP TO?
AND I WAS IN SUCH A GOOD MOOD THIS MORNING ...
... YEESH.
WE'RE GONNA BE LATE TO SEE IZUMI.
I TOLD HIM TO MEET ME IN ARCANA'S LOBBY.
DON'T TELL ME HE'S RUN OFF WITH IT AND IS TRYING TO SELL IT.
AND HE'S THE ONE WITH THE FLASH DRIVE THAT HAS ALL THE KAMUHABURI RECORDS ON IT.
3
YORO (STAGGER)

...WE...
...WE DID IT!
WH...
WHOA...
LOOK! WE MADE IT BACK TO ARCANA, MAKINO...!
DOSA
DOSA
DOSA (PLUMP)

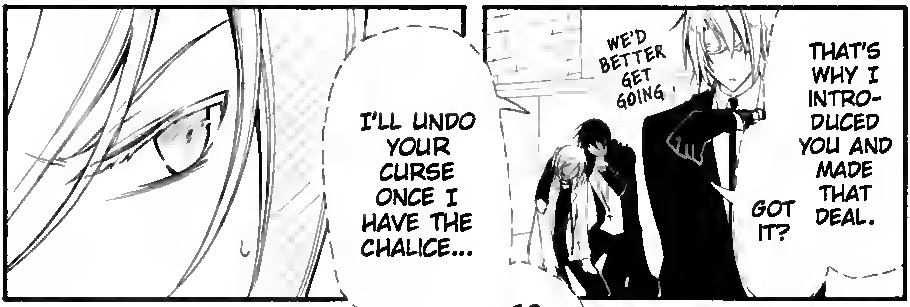

UNH... UNLIKE YOU, I DIDN'T GET ANY TIME TO RELAX, MUCH LESS SLEEP.
WHY ARE YOU SUCH A WRECK?

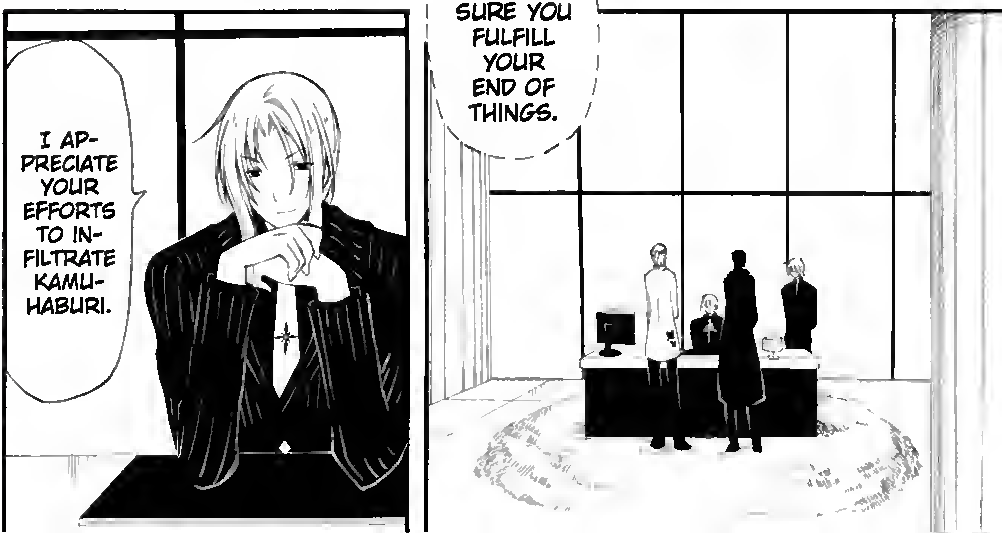

WHAT'RE YOU TWO DOING?
AND WHY'S MAKINO WITH YOU?
MY... BODY IS SO HEAVY, I THOUGHT WE WERE DEAD.
IT'S OVER! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
WAAAAAH!


...ARCANA SUDDENLY SHOWED UP TO GET THE RELICS INFO FROM ME...
YESTER-DAY...
...AFTER WE FLED KAMUHABURI AND SPLIT UP LAST NIGHT...

KAMUHABURI IS RELOCATING THEIR RELICS FASTER THAN WE EXPECTED
WE HAVE TO MOVE TONIGHT IF WE'RE GOING TO RECOVER ANYTHING!
I'M NOT!
YEAH, RIGHT!
THEN KEEP THE INTEL AND COME WITH US!
FINE!
...SO YOU HAVE AN EXCUSE TO NEGATE OUR AGREEMENT!
I SMELL A RAT!
SUSPICIOUS!
YOU'RE ONLY SAYING THAT...
SEARCH
KAMUHABURI EMPTIED THIS PLACE ALREADY ...
AND NOW OVER THERE.
ARCANA
ARCANA
OVER HERE NEXT.
...I SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT RUNNING ALL OVER TOWN WITH THEM LOOKING FOR RELICS TO PROTECT THE FLASH DRIVE AS MY COLLATERAL
.....SO...
OH, I'LL THANK YOU WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER.
CAN'T YOU SHOW A LITTLE GRATITUDE?
...THAT'S ROUGH.
GUTTARI (SLUMP)
ぐったり...
I BET WE COVERED EVERY INCH OF KANTO
WE JUST FINISHED... AND CAME STRAIGHT HERE...
KOSO (WHISPER)
?
MORE IMPORTANTLY ...
...YOU BETTER NOT HAVE FORGOTTEN MY OBJECTIVE.

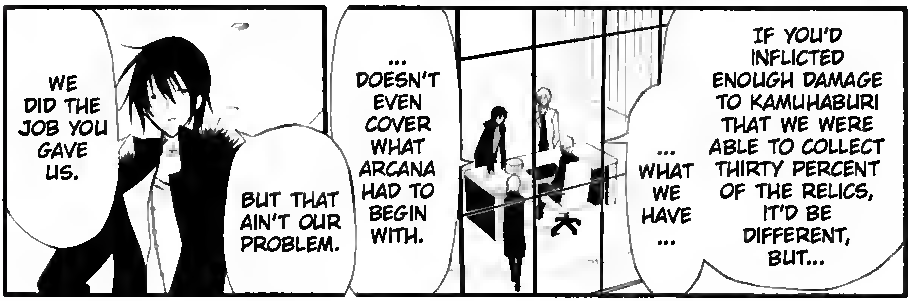
I TOLD YOU BEFORE, REMEMBER?
WE'LL GET ALL OF KAMUHABURI'S INFO ON THE DIVINE RELICS, JUST LIKE IZUMI WANTS, AND...
...WHEN HE PULLS OUT THE CHALICE OF CREATION TO UNDO YOUR CURSE...
...I'LL STEAL IT.
!


THAT'S WHY I INTRODUCED YOU AND MADE THAT DEAL.
GOT IT?
WE'D BETTER GET GOING.
I'LL UNDO YOUR CURSE ONCE I HAVE THE CHALICE...


...SO MAKE SURE YOU FULFILL YOUR END OF THINGS.
I APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS TO INFILTRATE KAMUHABURI.

...KAMU-HABURI WAS QUICKER, AND WE ONLY COLLECTED 20 TO 30 PERCENT OF THE ITEMS.
...DESPITE USING THE KAMIGURA AND THE DATA ON THE FLASH DRIVE TO TRY TO RECOVER THE RELICS...
... HOW-EVER ...
AND THANK YOU FOR HELPING US RETRIEVE THE RELICS AS WELL, NAO.
ガシ
GASU (JAB)
UTSURA (DIZZY)
... WAKE UP.
AW, HOW DISAP-POINT-ING.
AND AFTER WE MANAGED TO COLLECT THAT INFO.
...WELL, WE STILL EXPECT TO BE COMPEN-SATED.
SORRY TO BE PUSHY...
...BUT CAN YOU USE THE CHALICE TO UNDO NAO'S CURSE NOW?
AFTER ALL, THE TWO OF US RISKED OUR LIVES...
...TO GET THE INFORMA-TION YOU WANTED.
PAY-MENT... AH. YOU SAY.

AS FAR AS THAT GOES...
...I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT IT'S A BIT INCONGRUOUS.

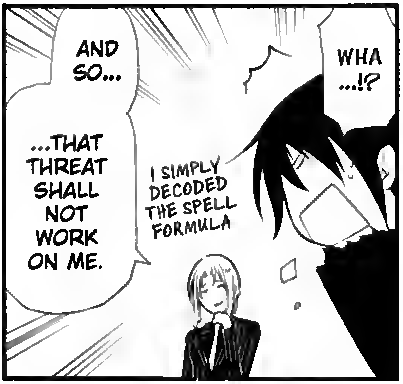

IF YOU'D INFLICTED ENOUGH DAMAGE TO KAMUHABURI THAT WE WERE ABLE TO COLLECT THIRTY PERCENT OF THE RELICS, IT'D BE DIFFERENT, BUT...
... WHAT WE HAVE ...
... DOESN'T EVEN COVER WHAT ARCANA HAD TO BEGIN WITH.
BUT THAT AIN'T OUR PROBLEM.
WE DID THE JOB YOU GAVE US.

BE-SIDES... DID YOU FORGET?
SU (PSH)
THERE'S A BINDING CONTRACT BETWEEN US.

IF YOU TRY TO REVOKE IT NOW...
...THE CURSE WILL SPREAD OUT FROM YOUR WRIST ...
...AND THREE DAYS FROM NOW YOU'LL BE DEAD.
HEH

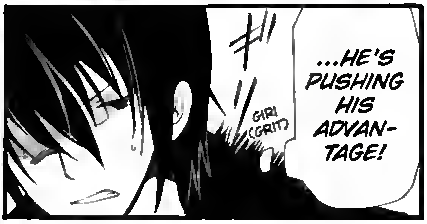
OH, THAT PACT?
HIRA (WAVE)
I HATE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT I'VE ALREADY UNDONE IT.

FAIR IS FAIR...
WE RECOVERED TWENTY PERCENT OF THE RELICS.
I'M WILLING TO UNDO A CORRE-SPONDING TWENTY PERCENT OF HIS CURSE. WELL?


WHA ...!?
I SIMPLY DECODED THE SPELL FORMULA
AND SO...
...THAT THREAT SHALL NOT WORK ON ME.

...I'M NOT AN OGRE...
... THOUGH ...

BUT...
...AS LONG AS HE REVEALS THE CHALICE HE'S HIDING...

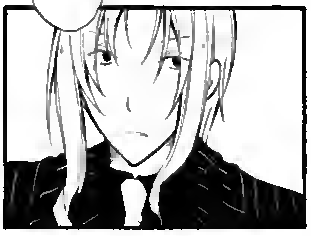

...HE'S PUSHING HIS ADVAN-TAGE!
GIRI (GRIT)

FORGET TWENTY PERCENT. I WANT IT ALL—
MAKI-NO-KUN.
YES, SIR.
KACHA (CLINK)
THIS IS AN EXTRACTION OF THE CHALICE OF CREATION'S DIVINE POWER.
HERE, TAKE IT.
.....! NO! YOU GOTTA BRING OUT THE CHALICE ITSELF...!!
DON'T GIVE US THIS BULLSHIT.
HEY, WHY AREN'T YOU SAYING ANYTHING?
... HAAH.
TWENTY PERCENT, HUH?
SU (PSH)
IT'S ...
...A HUGE DISAP-POINT-MENT.
.....
YOU SEE?
NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, IT JUST ISN'T EQUITA-BLE...

GUBI (GLUG)

PWAH...
BUT ...
...IF THIS WILL EASE MY FITS, I'LL TAKE TWENTY PERCENT.
SORRY.

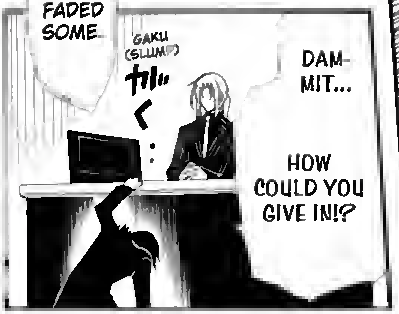
.....
HUH?



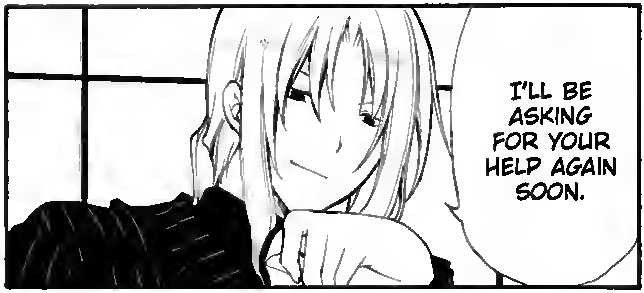
KOO (KWOO)
...AH, HOT!

...UNH!
YOU...

.....
IT'S
...
...
FADED
SOME.


GAKU
(SLUMP)
DAM-
MIT...
HOW
COULD YOU
GIVE IN!?

JUUU
(SIZZLE)

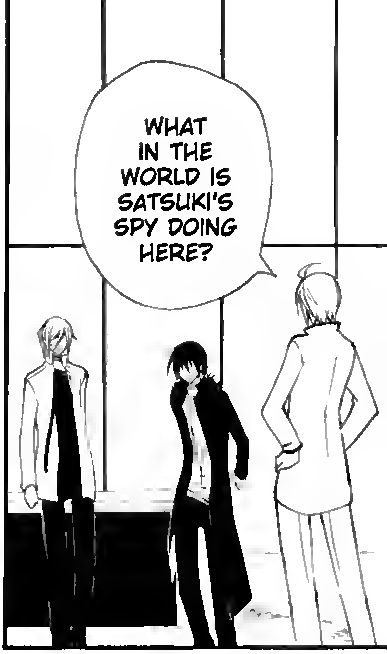

I'LL BE
ASKING
FOR YOUR
HELP AGAIN
SOON.

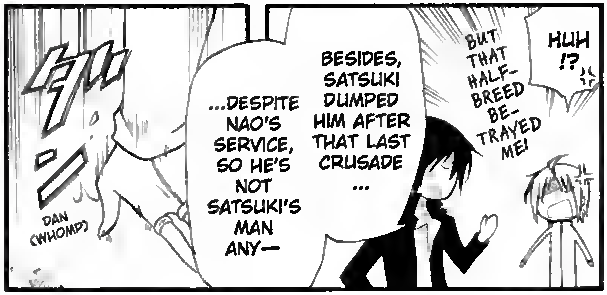
NOW,
NOW...
I HAVEN'T
SAID THAT
I WON'T
SHARE
MORE.
YOU'LL
GET
ANOTHER
CHANCE.

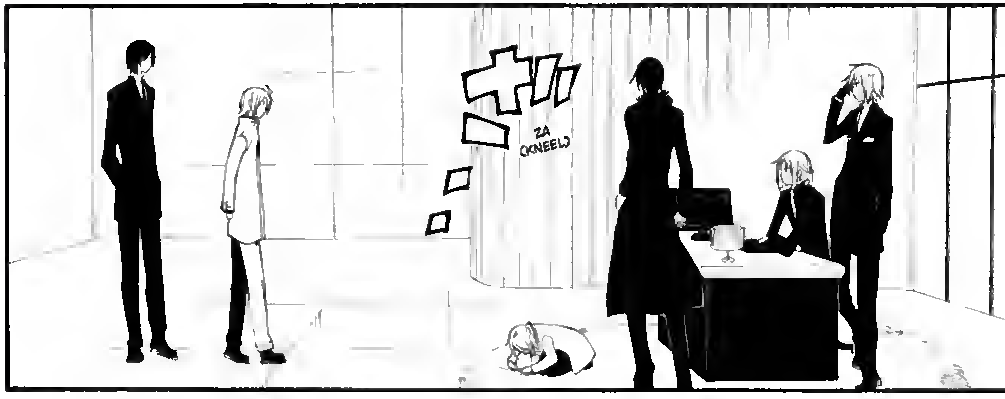
GACHA
(KACHAK)
?

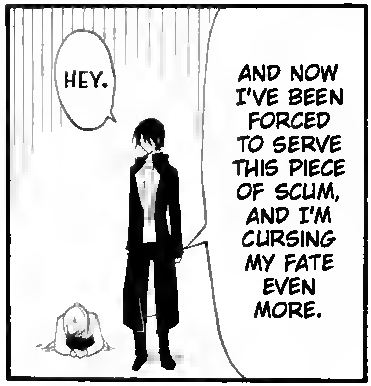
YOOO, IZUMI!
WE'VE COME TO MAKE OUR REPORT!!
DON (BOOM)
HEY, I HEARD THAT WHILE I WAS OFF RELAXING...
...YOU USED THESE HALF-BLOODS TO GET YOUR REVENGE ON KAMUHABURI?
ZUKA (TROT)
ZUKA
PURE-BLOOD!
HATA (FREEZE)
.....
...ER...

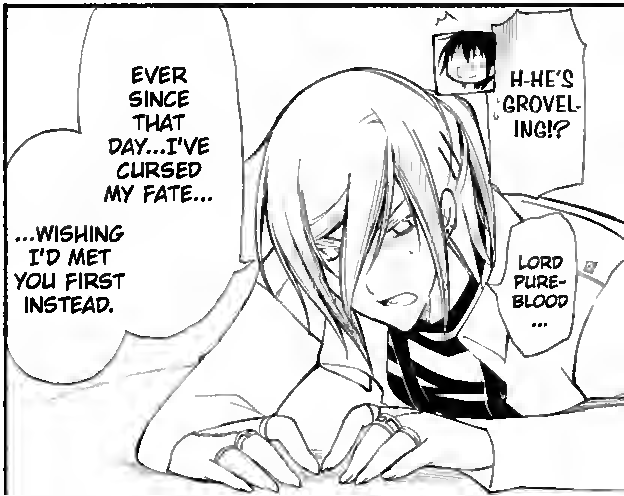
TCH... WELL, THIS IS AWK-WARD.
HE'S GOT HIS USES, OKAY?


WHAT IN THE WORLD IS SATSUKI'S SPY DOING HERE?

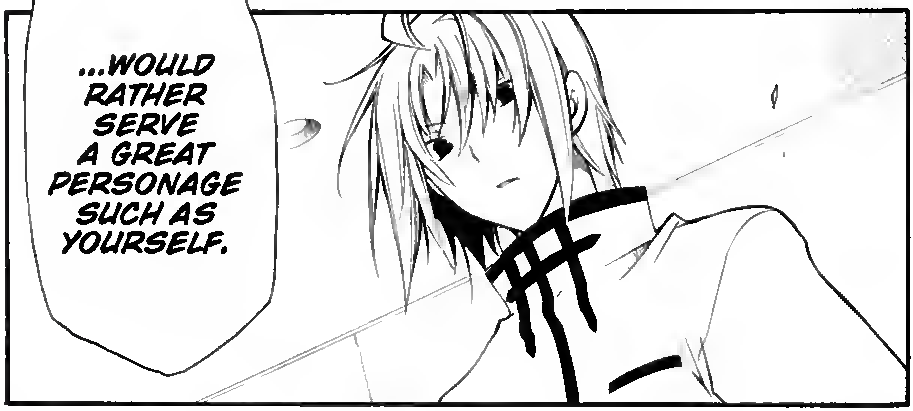

HUH!?
BUT THAT HALF-BREED BE-TRAYED ME!
BESIDES, SATSUKI DUMPED HIM AFTER THAT LAST CRUSADE ...
...DESPITE NAO'S SERVICE, SO HE'S NOT SATSUKI'S MAN ANY—
DAN (WHOMP)


ZA (KNEEL)

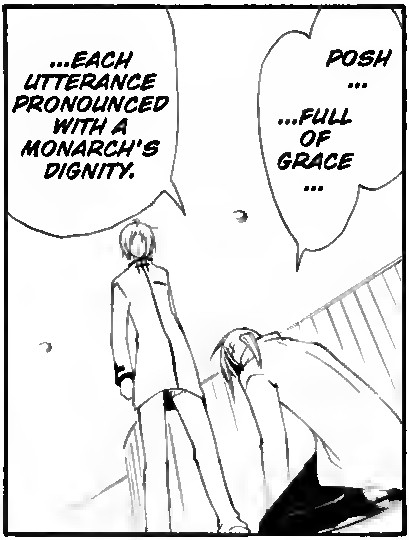

HEY.
AND NOW I'VE BEEN FORCED TO SERVE THIS PIECE OF SCUM, AND I'M CURSING MY FATE EVEN MORE.


H-HE'S GROVEL-ING!?
LORD PURE-BLOOD ...
EVER SINCE THAT DAY...I'VE CURSED MY FATE...
...WISHING I'D MET YOU FIRST INSTEAD.

I...
...
TRULY
...


...WOULD RATHER SERVE A GREAT PERSONAGE SUCH AS YOURSELF.

IDEAL MASTER
IDEAL MASTER
IDEAL MASTER
YOU'RE AN IDEAL MAS-TER...!
...MASTER
...ASTER...
ER-
ER-
ZAA (SWOOSH)


...EACH UTTERANCE PRONOUNCED WITH A MONARCH'S DIGNITY.
POSH
...
...FULL OF GRACE
...

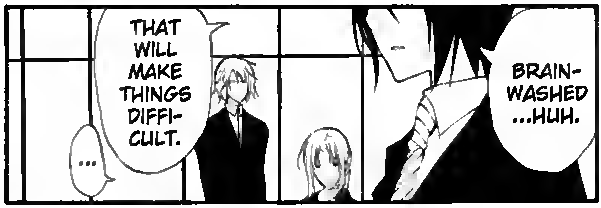
I BET YOU'VE BEEN FLATTERED RIGHT INTO BUYING A REALLY EXPENSIVE URN.
MAN.
KYURARARARARA (SPARKLE)
LET BYGONES BE BYGONES— YOU ARE MY LOYAL SERVANT!

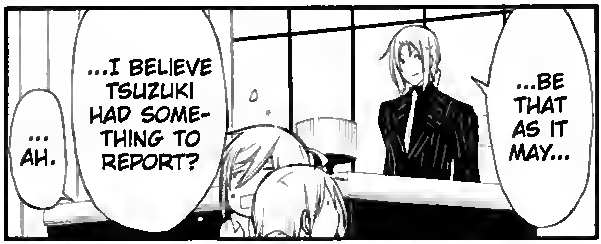
HEH

AH... THAT.
THEY'VE BRAIN-WASHED HER SO COMPLETELY...
...SHE ACTUALLY ATTACKED ME. WE'LL HAVE TO PUT THAT OFF FOR NOW.

...BUT COULDN'T BRING TSUKIMIYA BACK?
OH, SO YOU STRUCK AT KAMU-HABURI...
SIR PURE-BLOOD!
MY MAN!
HISHI (CLASP)

THAT'S RIGHT. I HAVE IM-PORTANT NEWS TO SHARE.
SHOOT, SHOOT.

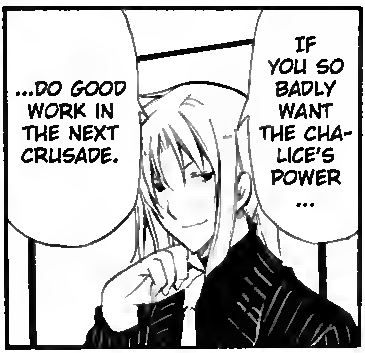

...
THAT WILL MAKE THINGS DIFFI-CULT.
BRAIN-WASHED ...HUH.


...AH.
...I BELIEVE TSUZUKI HAD SOME-THING TO REPORT?
...BE THAT AS IT MAY...

IN SEVEN NIGHTS ...
...THE NEXT WAVE OF DIVINE RELICS WILL APPEAR WITH THE FULL MOON.
...RECEIVED A NEW ORACLE THIS VERY MORNING.
I ACTUALLY...
PI CHUCKO

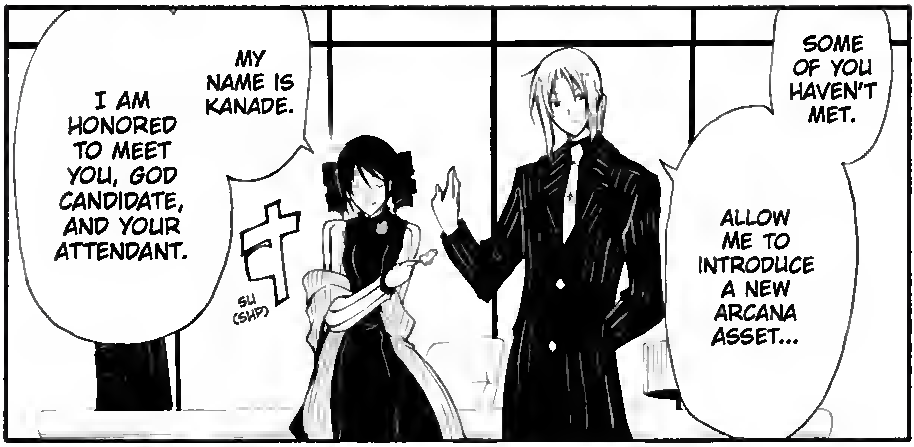
THE NEXT CRUSADE IS UNDER-WAY.

KATSU CHAKO
OH MY... SOUNDS LIKE FUN.


IF YOU SO BADLY WANT THE CHALICE'S POWER ...
...DO GOOD WORK IN THE NEXT CRUSADE.

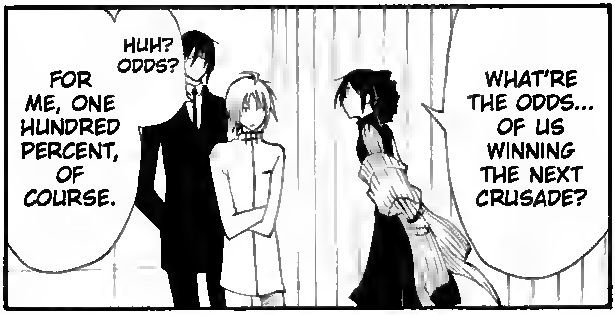
...!
SEE? DIDN'T I SAY I'D NEED YOUR HELP SOON?

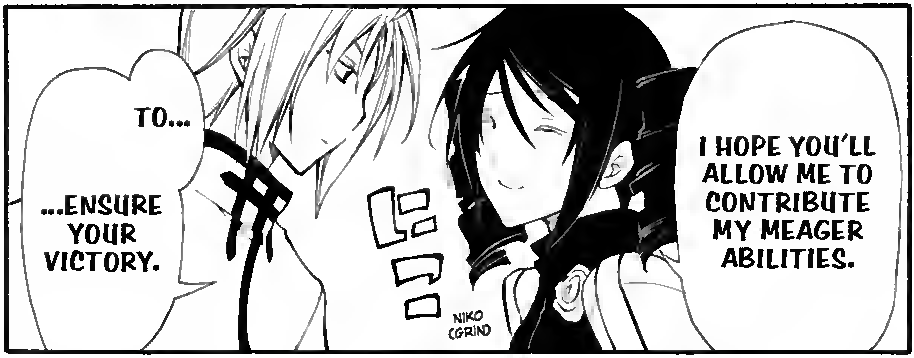
HELLO, EVERY-ONE.
SORRY I'M LATE.
KATSU
KATSU CTAK!
KA-NADE ...


I AM HONORED TO MEET YOU, GOD CANDIDATE, AND YOUR ATTENDANT.
MY NAME IS KANADE.
SU (SHP)
SOME OF YOU HAVEN'T MET.
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE A NEW ARCANA ASSET...

WHA... "ASSET" !?
KANADE !?
KOSO (WHISPER)
HOW !?
GAN (SHOCK)
HIS EXCELLENCY FEELS SUCH TRAITORS ...
...SHOULD BE COAXED INTO THE FOLD WITH NOTABLE POSITIONS.
IT'S LIKE CARRYING A BOMB AROUND.

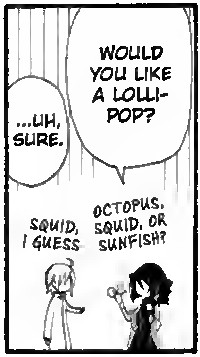
PON (CLAP)
MY! HOW PROMISING...
THAT'S WHAT I LIKE TO HEAR!


WHAT'RE THE ODDS... OF US WINNING THE NEXT CRUSADE?
HUH? ODDS?
FOR ME, ONE HUNDRED PERCENT, OF COURSE.

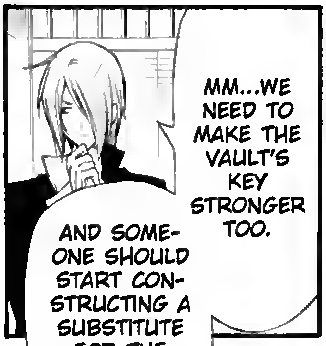

I HOPE YOU'LL ALLOW ME TO CONTRIBUTE MY MEAGER ABILITIES.
NIKO (GRIN)
...ENSURE YOUR VICTORY.
TO...

HUH?
WHERE'S OHMA?

SO SHE'S THE EX-KAMUHABURI OFFICER...
SHE DOES SEEM QUITE SHREWD.
HAMU (CHOMP)


WOULD YOU LIKE A LOLLIPOP?
...UH, SURE.
SQUID, I GUESS
OCTOPUS, SQUID, OR SUNFISH?

...AH, YES...
OHMA...
HE WENT OFF ON HIS OWN TO ENJOY HIS NEW FREEDOM.
...FROM LIFE.
I'D PROBABLY CHOOSE JUST OHMA.
BASED ON PERSONALITY
RIGHT!
ER... NO.
OH...?
IF IT WERE UP TO YOU, WOULD YOU APPOINT BOTH OF US?
BUT IF HE WERE HERE, THEY'D BOTH BE "ASSETS," RIGHT?
...AW.
TOO BAD. HE WAS A GOOD GUY.
IT'S QUITE THE PACKAGE FOR MY...
...NEW START IN LIFE. ♡
?
HEE.
AMPLE PAY FROM ARCANA, PLUS A POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY...


MM...WE NEED TO MAKE THE VAULT'S KEY STRONGER TOO.
AND SOMEONE SHOULD START CONSTRUCTING A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE KAMIGURA, STAT...

CHIKA (BLINK)
チカッ
...OWW!

PUT THE RELICS IN KAMUHABURI'S VAULT FOR NOW.
WEAPON-TYPES IN STOREHOUSE FOUR, PLEASE.

I'LL ...
...GO GRAB SOMETHING COOL FOR THEM!
TA (DASH)
OH...
...BUT I'M OKAY!

KIKUSAKA-SAN...
IS THAT... EYE PAIN FROM KANADE-SAN'S ATTACK?
HUH?
YEAH.
DON'T WORRY. THEY'RE STARTING TO HEAL ALREADY.

SORRY FOR THE DELAY. GOOD WORK DRIVING THEM BACK.

KIKU-SAKA.
KA (TAK)
DO//

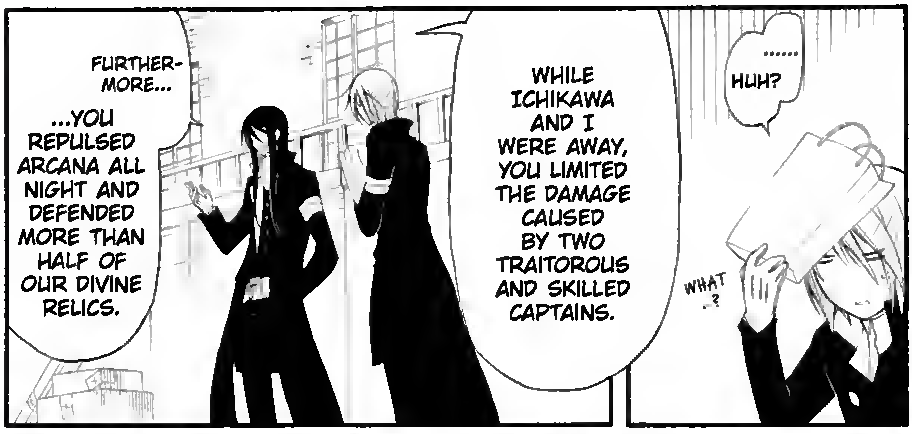
TOKI-WA-SAN...

SU (BOW)

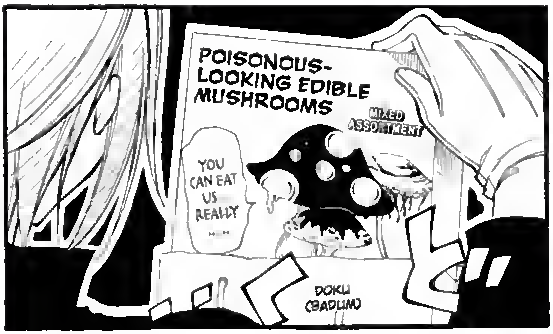
AND I...
...DIS-RUPTED YOUR MEETING... MADE YOU CUT IT SHORT...
GU (CLENCH)

IF ONLY I'D IDENTIFIED THOSE TWO AS THE SPIES EARLIER...!
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T PROTECT THE KAMI-GURA.

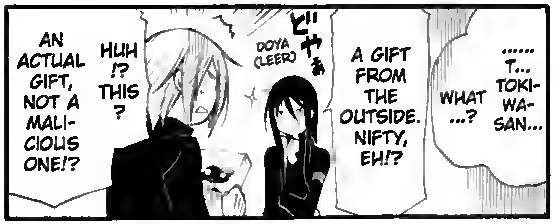
PEN
(WHAT)

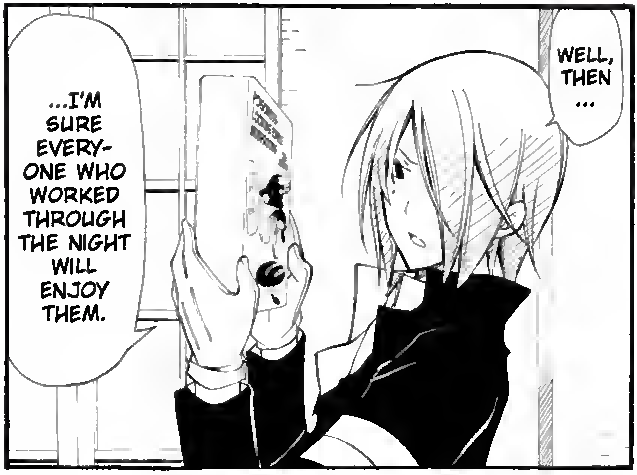

WHILE ICHIKAWA AND I WERE AWAY, YOU LIMITED THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY TWO TRAITOROUS AND SKILLED CAPTAINS.
.....
HUH?
WHAT..?
FURTHER-MORE...
...YOU REPULSED ARCANA ALL NIGHT AND DEFENDED MORE THAN HALF OF OUR DIVINE RELICS.

THANKS TO THOSE OF YOU WHO REMAINED AND STRUGGLED THROUGH. KAMUHABURI AVOIDED COMPLETE DESTRUC-TION.
THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO APOLO-GIZE.


POISONOUS-LOOKING EDIBLE MUSHROOMS
MIXED ASSORTMENT
YOU CAN EAT US REALLY ...
DOKU (BADUM)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
YOU DID WELL.
WEREN'T YOU CORNERED BY AN ARCANA SPY TOO?
GASA (RUSTLE)


AN ACTUAL GIFT, NOT A MALI-CIOUS ONE!?
HUH !? THIS ?
DOYA (LEER)
A GIFT FROM THE OUTSIDE. NIFTY, EH!?
WHAT ...?
..... T... TOKI-WA-SAN...


...I'M SURE EVERY-ONE WHO WORKED THROUGH THE NIGHT WILL ENJOY THEM.
WELL, THEN ...

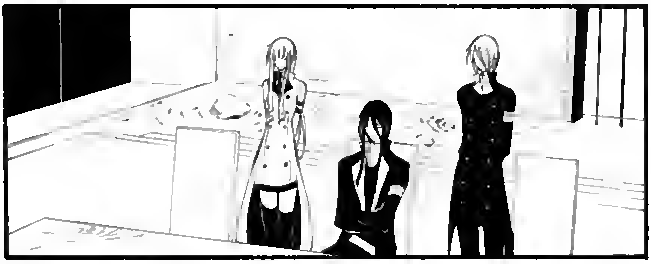
WELL... IF YOU DON'T WANT IT...
UNH ...
I...I'LL TAKE IT! ABSO-LUTELY! YEESH...

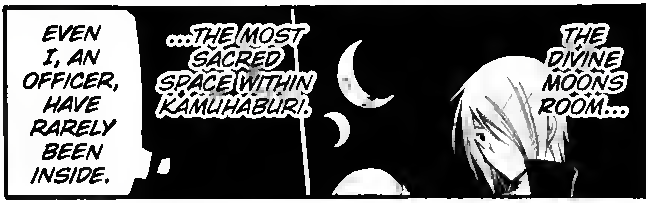
KIKU-SAKA...
...WE'RE RESUMING OUR MEETING IN THE DIVINE MOONS ROOM.
...AH, BY THE WAY...

BOSO (MUMBLE)
IT'S ALMOST TIME, TOKIWA-SAN.
EH?
THEY MIGHT END UP PART OF A DRINKING GAME.

WE MUST GREET OUR GUESTS.

I BEG YOUR PARDON.
...AND THE PROMISE OF TRUST AND COOPERATION...
I HAVE ESCORTED THE GUESTS.



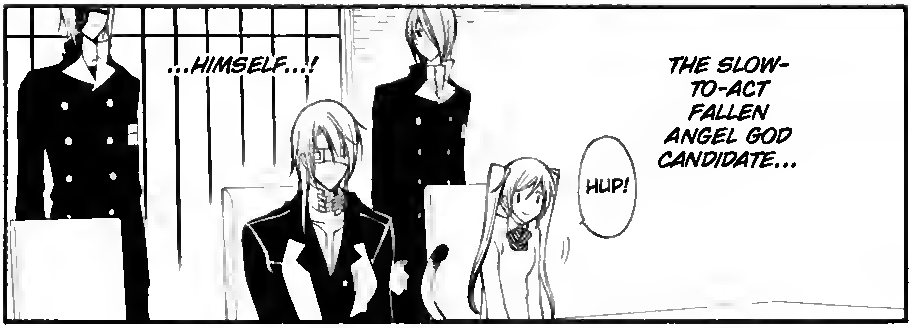

EVEN I, AN OFFICER, HAVE RARELY BEEN INSIDE.
...THE MOST SACRED SPACE WITHIN KAMUHABURI.
THE DIVINE MOONS ROOM...

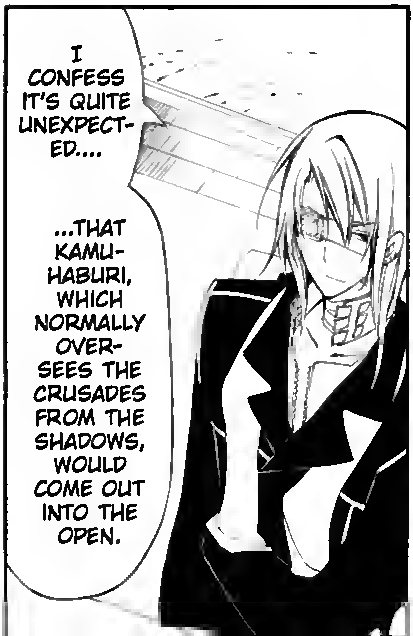
...THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF RESPECT TOWARD THAT GUEST...
TO BE INVITED INTO THIS ROOM SIGNIFIES...

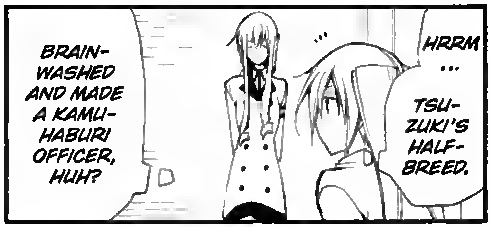
GARA (SLIDE)
HYOKO (POP)
... WHOA.
WHAT A PRETTY ROOM.
WHICH IS THE BEST SEAT?
TOTE (TROT)
TOTE (TROT)
"GUEST OF HONOR," INDEED.
HAVE A SEAT ...
GATA (KLATTER)
.....
THE GOD CANDIDATE'S ATTENDENT, WHOM I'VE SEEN BEFORE...
ZOKU (SHUDDER)
... HUH?
FOUND IT!

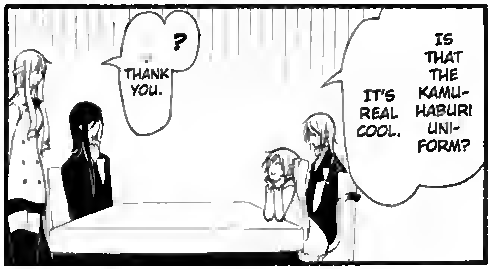
KOTSU (TOK)
THE AIR...
KOTSU
KOTSU
...SHIFTED IN AN INSTANT...

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE INTERRUPTION LAST NIGHT.
...NOT AT ALL.
HEH.


...HIMSELF...!
THE SLOW-TO-ACT FALLEN ANGEL GOD CANDIDATE...
HUP!


I CONFESS IT'S QUITE UNEXPECTED....
...THAT KAMUHABURI, WHICH NORMALLY OVERSEES THE CRUSADES FROM THE SHADOWS, WOULD COME OUT INTO THE OPEN.


BRAINWASHED AND MADE A KAMUHABURI OFFICER, HUH?
...
HRRM...
TSUZUKI'S HALFBREED.

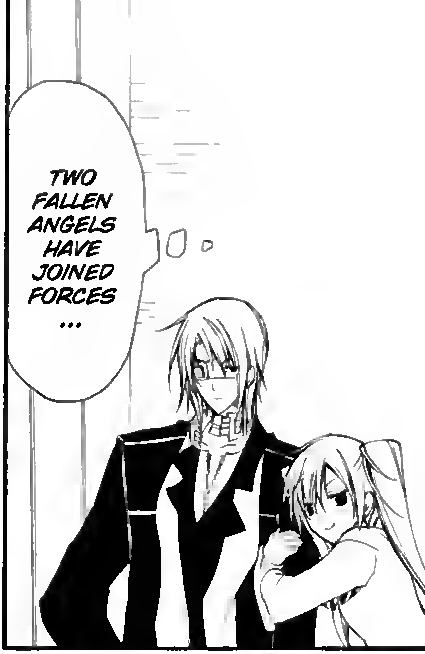

?
THANK YOU.
IT'S REAL COOL.
IS THAT THE KAMUHABURI UNIFORM?

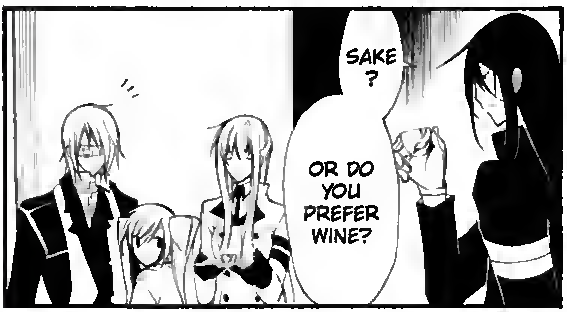
WE MUST REIN IN THESE ARCANA SCAVENGERS.
HEH... I HEAR LAST NIGHT WAS A DECLARATION OF OPEN WAR BETWEEN YOU TWO.
...! YOU HAVE SHARP EARS.
IT COULD BE... ...CRITICAL TO THE CRUSADES.
INDEED.
YOU ARE POWERFUL... AND WISE.
BUT WITH ARCANA ALLIED TO TSUZUKI, HE HAS THE STRENGTH OF AN ORGANIZATION BEHIND HIM.
THEREFORE ...
...ALL YOU NEED TO DO...
...IS OBTAIN EVEN GREATER ORGANIZATIONAL BACKING.
SU (SSK)
YOUR INTERESTS PARALLEL KAMUHABURI'S.
WE CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH THAT.

PASHI
(CLASP)

AN ALLIANCE, FOR MUTUAL GAIN.
...AN INTRIGUING PROPOSAL.
THE NEXT CRUSADE MAY NOT BE SO BORING AFTER ALL.

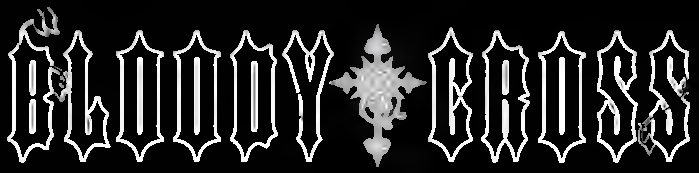
...SATSUKI'S THE STRONGEST, BESTEST FALLEN ANGEL OF ALL! ♡
'CEPT ...


TWO FALLEN ANGELS HAVE JOINED FORCES ...


SAKE ?
OR DO YOU PREFER WINE?

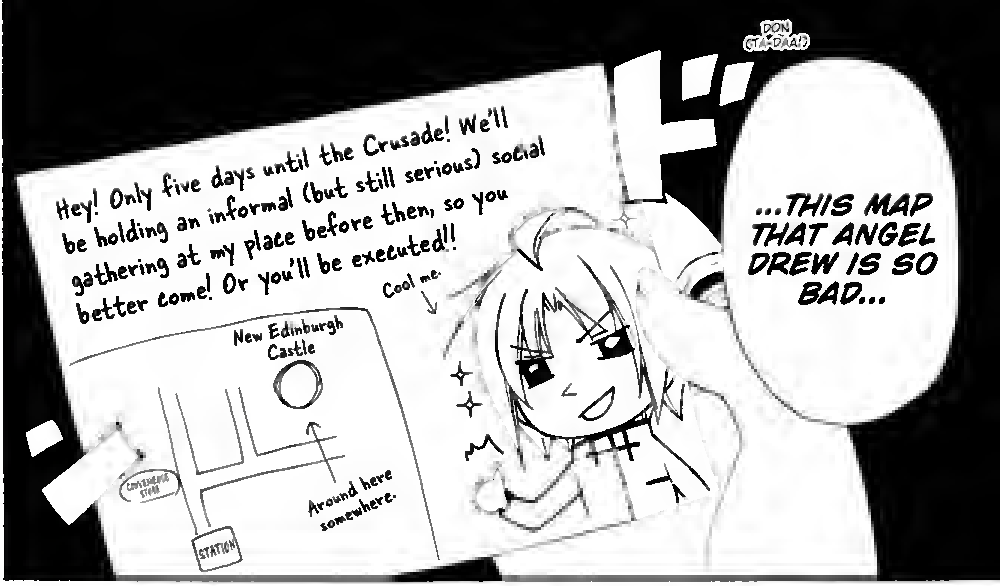
THIS IS FINE. .....
KOTO GINK

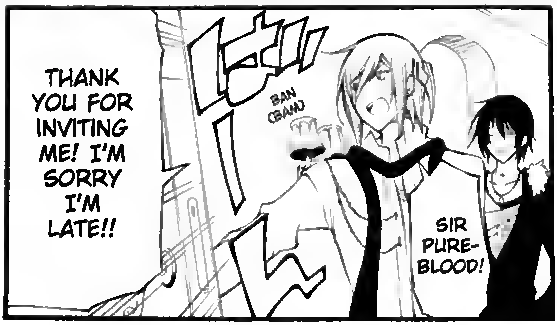
A TOAST TO OUR NEW...
...ALLI-ANCE.

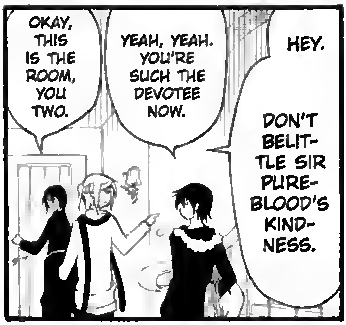

BLOODY CROSS

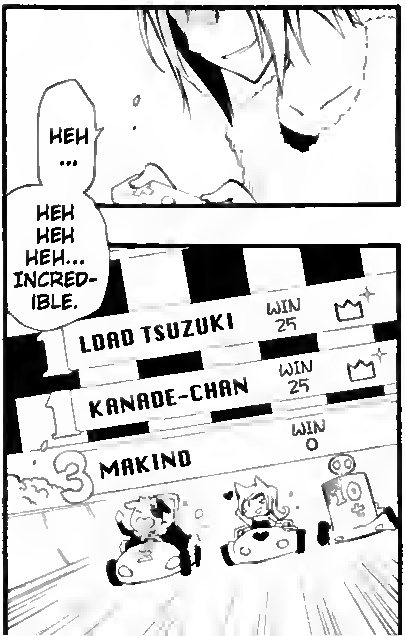
BLOODY CROSS

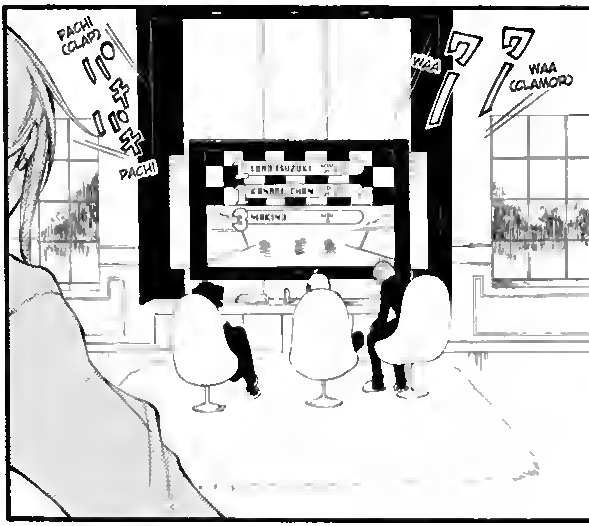
ポーン
PINPOON (DING-DONG)
...NEW EDINBURGH CASTLE, HUH.
...SO THIS IS...
キィ
KII (CREAK)
... WEL-COME.
EVERYONE ELSE IS HERE.
YOU'RE BOTH LATE.
DID YOU GET LOST?
YEAH... SORRY ABOUT THAT.
BUT SERI-OUSLY ...
PIRA (FLIP)


DON GA-DAAN
...THIS MAP THAT ANGEL DREW IS SO BAD...
Hey! Only five days until the Crusade! We'll be holding an informal (but still serious) social gathering at my place before then, so you better come! Or you'll be executed!!
Cool me.
New Edinburgh Castle
CONVENIENCE STORE
STATION
Around here somewhere.









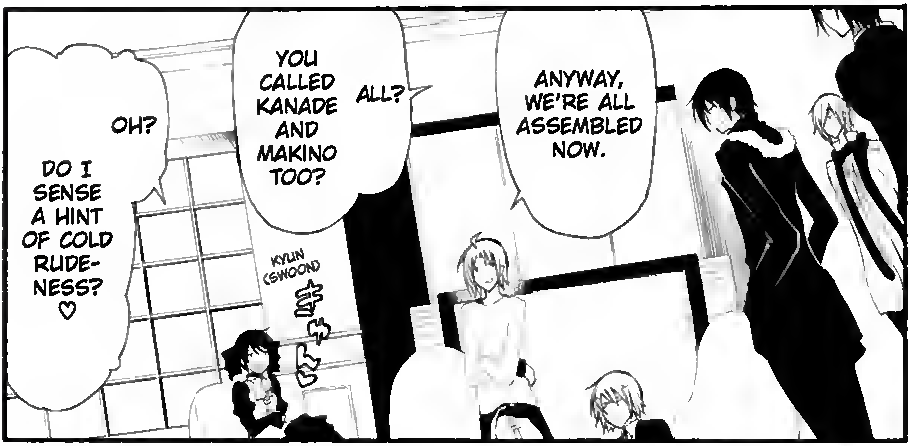
CAR (LEFT): KING

YOU'RE GOOD AT THIS...
TO WIN 25 OF 50 RACES OVER ME WHEN I'D BOASTED I WAS UNDEFEATED ...
...UP UNTIL NOW.
YOU'RE QUITE THE ADEPT RACER YOURSELF.
I NEVER... ... THOUGHT I'D BE HUMILI-ATED AS MANY AS 25 TIMES.
WHAT IS IT WITH THEM...? I CAN'T EVEN COME CLOSE.
ZUZUN (GLOOM)

Chapter 35
His Sentiment

BUT IT'S 'COS OF YOUR MAP.
YEAH, SURE. SORRY.
I CAN'T STAND TARDI-NESS!
WE STARTED PLAYING VIDEO GAMES TO KILL TIME!

HEY! YOU'RE LATE! YOU JUST GOT HERE?
WHAT THE .....?

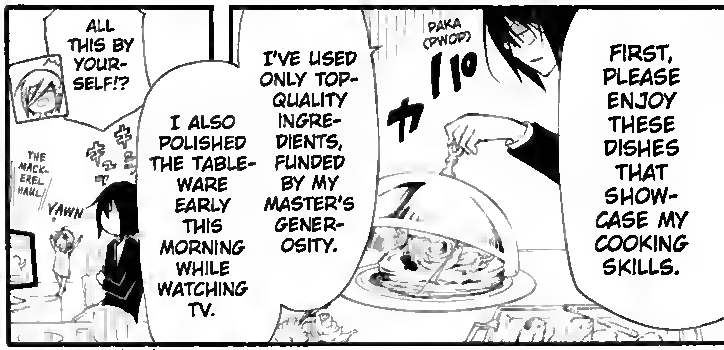

OH?
DO I SENSE A HINT OF COLD RUDE-NESS? ♡
YOU CALLED KANADE AND MAKINO TOO?
ALL?
KYUN (SWOON)
ANYWAY, WE'RE ALL ASSEMBLED NOW.

... SIGH.
BUT I AM A LITTLE DISAP-POINTED.
WHAT'S WITH THE "THOUGH" !?

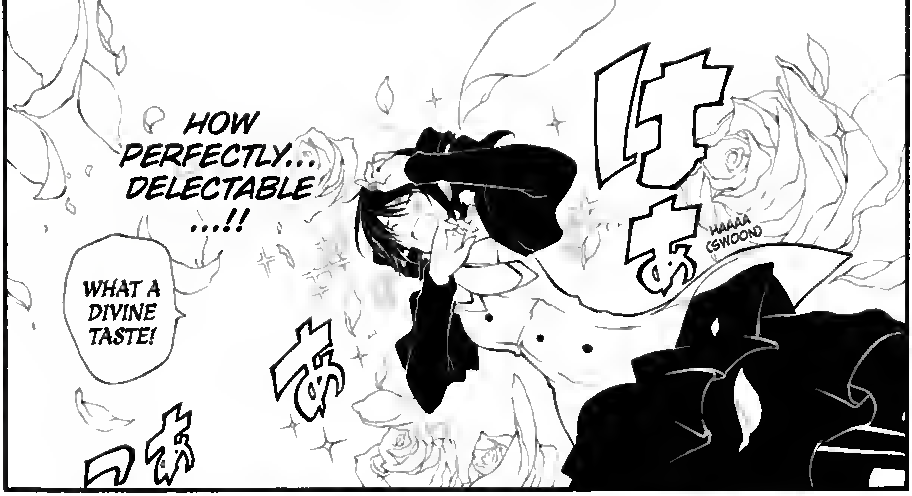
HIS EXCELLEN-CY WAS, REGRET-TABLY, TOO BUSY TO ATTEND...
AHEM.
...BUT SOME-ONE ELSE SHOWED UP.
NAH, I ACTU-ALLY INVITED IZUMI...

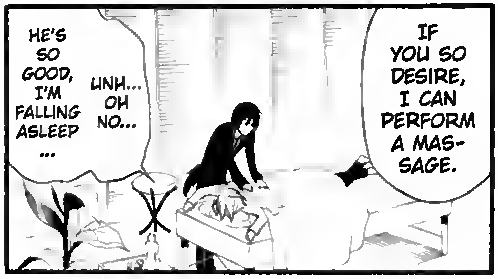
HE'S STILL MAKINO, THOUGH.
HE SEEMS FULL OF HIMSELF NOW THAT HE'S PLAYING "THE BOSS."
KYURARARA (GLITTER)
...SO...
...HE APPOINTED ME AS HIS PROXY!

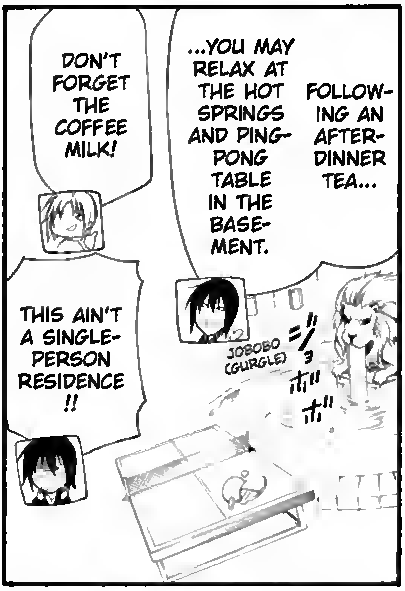
I DECIDED TO TAG ALONG WHEN I HEARD IT WAS GOING TO BE A PARTY...
...THROWN BY A GOD CANDIDATE AND HOSTED AT HIS OWN RESIDENCE.
I WAS DYING TO SEE WHAT SORT OF OPULENT LIFESTYLE HE MIGHT LEAD...
BUT...
...THIS IS FAIRLY ORDINARY.
...OH?
I WONDER...
...IF YOU'LL STILL BE SAYING SO AFTER YOU LEAVE NEW EDINBURGH CASTLE... WE'LL SEE.
HANAMURA.
PACHIN (SNAP)
YES, SIR.
...SINCE EVERYONE HAS ARRIVED...
...PLEASE FOLLOW ME...
...DEAR GUESTS.
KIII (CREAK)


ALL THIS BY YOURSELF!?
I ALSO POLISHED THE TABLEWARE EARLY THIS MORNING WHILE WATCHING TV.
THE MACKEREL HAUL!
YAWN
I'VE USED ONLY TOP-QUALITY INGREDIENTS, FUNDED BY MY MASTER'S GENEROSITY.
PAKA (PWOF)
FIRST, PLEASE ENJOY THESE DISHES THAT SHOWCASE MY COOKING SKILLS.

SFX: KYU (SQUI) KYU

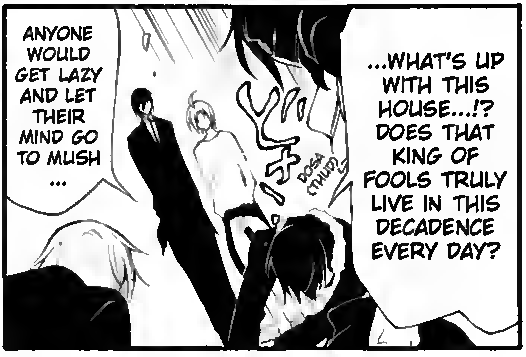

HOW PERFECTLY... DELECTABLE ...!!
WHAT A DIVINE TASTE!
HAAAA (SWOOND)


IF YOU SO DESIRE, I CAN PERFORM A MAS-SAGE.
UNH... OH NO...
HE'S SO GOOD, I'M FALLING ASLEEP ...


FOLLOW-ING AN AFTER-DINNER TEA...
...YOU MAY RELAX AT THE HOT SPRINGS AND PING-PONG TABLE IN THE BASE-MENT.
DON'T FORGET THE COFFEE MILK!
JOBOBO (GURGLE)
THIS AIN'T A SINGLE-PERSON RESIDENCE !!

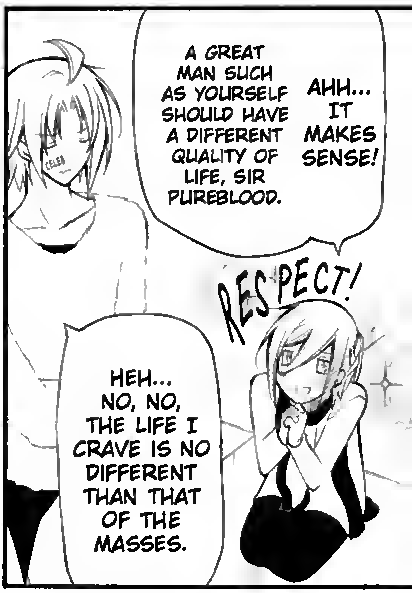
IF YOU WANT A NAP, I'LL SING YOU A LULLUBY.
AWOOOO!
ARF!
AWOOOO!
ZZZZ...
DON'T WORRY. WE HAVE PLENTY OF GUEST ROOMS READY.

UNNH ...
LIKE... LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS HIDDEN INSIDE AN AVERAGE-LOOKING HOUSE...


...WHAT'S UP WITH THIS HOUSE...!? DOES THAT KING OF FOOLS TRULY LIVE IN THIS DECADENCE EVERY DAY?
DOSA (THUD)
ANYONE WOULD GET LAZY AND LET THEIR MIND GO TO MUSH ...

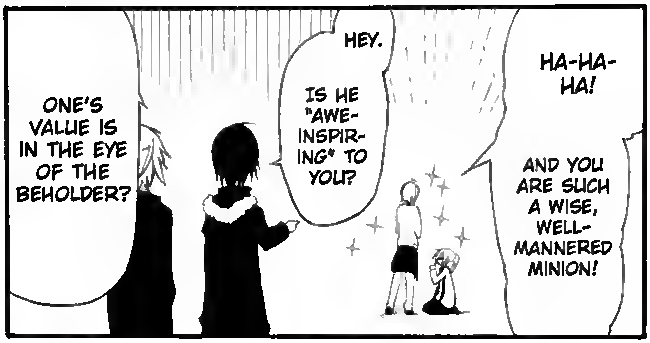
...NORMAL...!!
CELEB-RITY
IT'S NOT...
PAAAAAA (SPARKLE)
HIS AURA IS BLINDING...

...I MERELY EAT, PLAY, AND SLEEP—NOTHING MORE.
... THOUGH YOU SEE THE FRUITS OF MY WEALTH ...
DEPRAVED
WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT ...


A GREAT MAN SUCH AS YOURSELF SHOULD HAVE A DIFFERENT QUALITY OF LIFE, SIR PUREBLOOD.
AHH... IT MAKES SENSE!
RESPECT!
HEH... NO, NO, THE LIFE I CRAVE IS NO DIFFERENT THAN THAT OF THE MASSES.

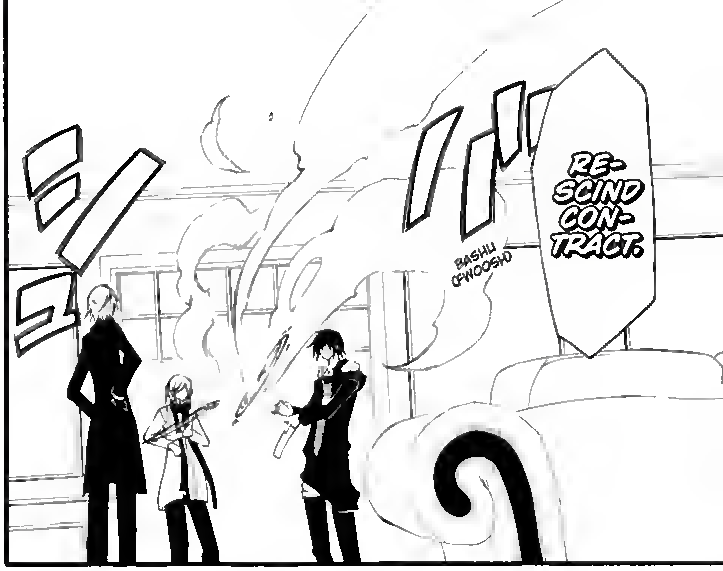
... TRULY AWE-INSPIR-ING.
KYUN (SWOOND)
THAT YOU'RE SO DOWN-TO-EARTH, SIR PURE-BLOOD, MAKES YOU...

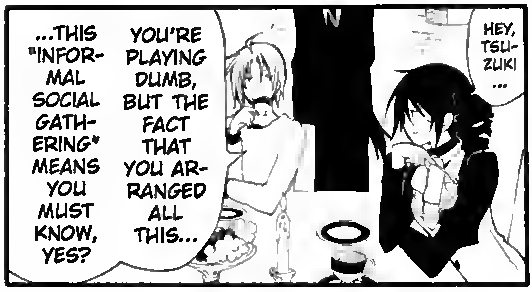
...OH, THAT'S RIGHT ...

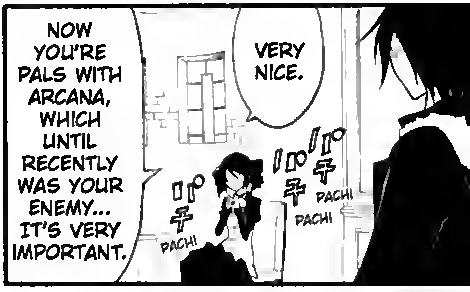

ONE'S VALUE IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER?
HEY.
IS HE "AWE-INSPIR-ING" TO YOU?
HA-HA-HA!
AND YOU ARE SUCH A WISE, WELL-MANNERED MINION!

HERE.
FOR YOU AND NAO FROM HIS EXCEL-LENCY.
WHAT IS IT?
PAKA (POP)
FOR THAT CONTRACT MARK ON YOUR WRIST... YOU SAID THE HEX WOULD SPREAD, RIGHT?
HIS EXCEL-LENCY SAID HE FELT BAD LEAVING YOU TWO IN A BAD WAY...
...AND PREPARED CONTRACT-CANCELING SPELL TAGS FOR YOU.
HAAH... MAN, THERE'D BETTER NOT BE SOME HIDDEN SUR-PRISE.
HOW RUDE! OF COURSE NOT!
WHAT AN ATTITUDE FOR A GUY WHO ANULLED IT ON HIS OWN.
I TOLD HIM THERE WAS NO NEED TO BE KIND TO VERMIN LIKE YOU
SHEESH... IT'S MORE KINDNESS THAN YOU DESERVE! YOU'D BETTER BE GRATEFUL, GOT IT?
OKAY, THEN, I REJECT YOUR EXIS-TENCE.
.....
YOU NEED TO START LEARN-ING TO SAY "NO."
AND YOU! YOU TOLERATE THIS SHIT AND GO ALONG WITH WAY TOO MUCH.
HEY!
HYO! (GRAB)
... WELL ...
...I CAN'T THINK OF A GOOD REASON TO REFUSE IT, SO I'M TAKING MINE.

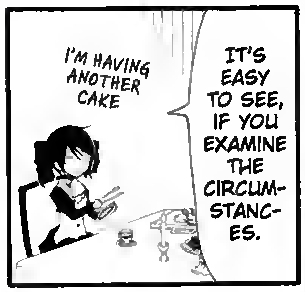
IT'S GONE
PACHI (CLAP)
PACHI


RE-SCIND CON-TRACT.
BASHU (WHOOSH)


HEY, TSU-ZUKI ...
YOU'RE PLAYING DUMB, BUT THE FACT THAT YOU AR-RANGED ALL THIS...
...THIS "INFOR-MAL SOCIAL GATH-ERING" MEANS YOU MUST KNOW, YES?


VERY NICE.
PACHI
PACHI
PACHI
NOW YOU'RE PALS WITH ARCANA, WHICH UNTIL RECENTLY WAS YOUR ENEMY... IT'S VERY IMPORTANT.

AH.
WHAT ? DOES THAT MEAN?

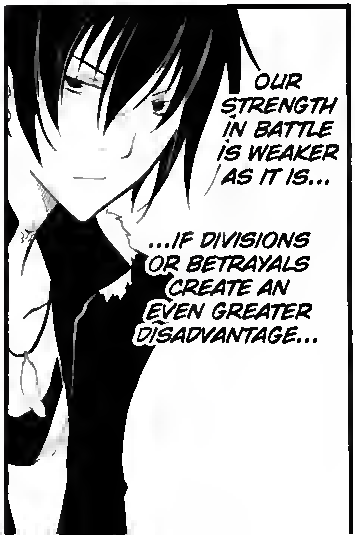

IT'S EASY TO SEE, IF YOU EXAMINE THE CIRCUM-STANC-ES.
I'M HAVING ANOTHER CAKE

THAT THIS NEXT CRUSADE ...
NIYA (SMIRK)
...WILL REQUIRE UNITY AMONGST YOUR FOLLOW-ERS.

THEN ARCANA FORGES AN ALLIANCE WITH HIS ENEMY, TSUZUKI...
...AND HE FINDS HIMSELF IN THE UNFAVORABLE POSITION OF HAVING TO BATTLE ALONE.
LET'S COLLABORATE!
ALLIANCE
HE HAD A PARTNERSHIP WITH ARCANA. BUT IT'S NOW DISSOLVED.
FIRST SATSUKI ...
SO ...
DOPURI (GLUP)
...YOU MUST CONSIDER THAT THEY'RE LIKELY TO FORM THEIR OWN COALITION.
THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD CRUSHED ARCANA, BUT INSTEAD THEY WERE DEALT A PAINFUL RETALIATION.
THAT'S PROBABLY MADE THEM HATE ARCANA EVEN MORE NOW.
NEXT, KAMUHABURI...
YOU CAN'T IGNORE ...
...THAT THESE TWO FORCES SHARE COMMON INTERESTS.
THOUGH FOR KAMUHABURI TO BE PARTICIPATING IN THE CRUSADE IS COMPLETELY UNPRECEDENTED...
AAAH...
...MM.
AND ...
...YOU FAILED TO MENTION, THOUGH YOU SURELY KNOW...

...THAT SATSUKI ...
...AND KAMU-HABURI ARE STRONGER...
...THAN ME AND ARCANA, RESPEC-TIVELY.

OH!
MOKKU
CHUNCHU
MOKYU
YOU SAY SUCH AWK-WARD THINGS SO EASILY.


OUR STRENGTH IN BATTLE IS WEAKER AS IT IS...
...IF DIVISIONS OR BETRAYALS CREATE AN EVEN GREATER DISADVANTAGE...

...SHE'S RIGHT...
IF THEY'RE WORKING TOGETHER, IT'S CRITICAL THAT WE ARE A UNIFIED TEAM.

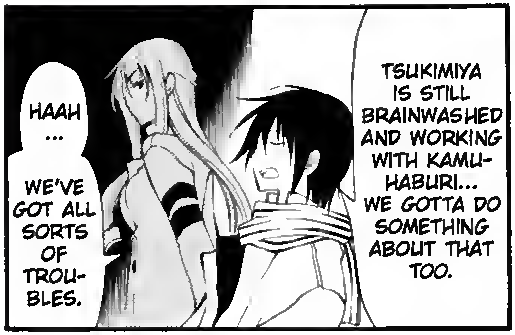
HEE-HEE... WELL, BEING THE UNDERDOG ISN'T A BAD THING.
IT FIRES ME UP.

...WE'LL DEFINITELY...
...LOSE TO SATSUKI IN THE NEXT CRUSADE...

ビ//
BI (POINT)
NO TURNING TRAITOR, OKAY?
GOT IT, YOU TWO?

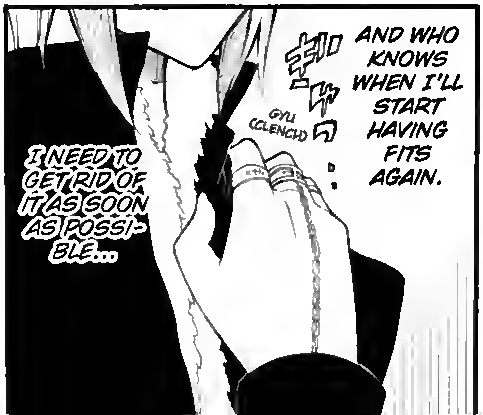
...ANY SNOOPS AND SPIES LIKE WHAT CROPPED UP IN THE CRUSADE WOULD STRANGLE US AND MAKE OUR JOB MOST INCONVENIENT.
SO THAT'S WHY...

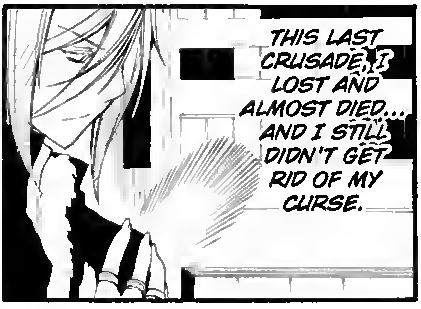
ZUBISHI! (THWAP)
ビギ
OWW!
.....
COMING FROM YOU OF ALL PEOPLE.


HAAH...
WE'VE GOT ALL SORTS OF TROUBLES.
TSUKIMIYA IS STILL BRAINWASHED AND WORKING WITH KAMUHABURI... WE GOTTA DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT TOO.

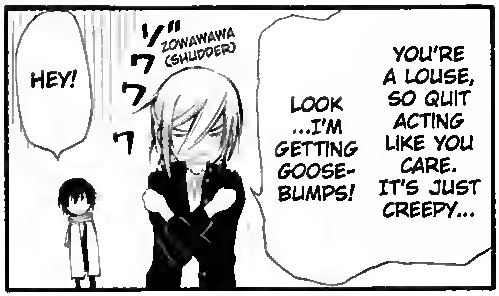
...GEEZ...
KOTSU (TOK)
KOTSU
THINGS NEVER SEEM TO IMPROVE FOR US.

UNDOING THE CURSE IS MY TOP PRIORITY RIGHT NOW.
...SPEAKING OF WHICH, I DON'T HEAR YOU SWOONING OVER TSUKIMIYA MUCH THESE DAYS.


I NEED TO GET RID OF IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...
GYU (CLENCH)
AND WHO KNOWS WHEN I'LL START HAVING FITS AGAIN.


THIS LAST CRUSADE, I LOST AND ALMOST DIED... AND I STILL DIDN'T GET RID OF MY CURSE.

...HN? COME TO THINK OF IT...
AH, RIGHT... 'COS YOU WERE SPYING FOR SATSUKI.
...THAT I HAD PURPOSELY POSITIONED MYSELF NEAR TSUZUKI.
...BESIDES, I THINK SHE NOTICED ...
...SATSUKI THINKS YOU'RE DEAD, SO DON'T STICK YOUR NECK OUT TOO MUCH DURING THE NEXT CRUSADE, OKAY?
YOU KNOW ...
IT'D BE BAD IF YOU DREW TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO YOURSELF AND LET HIM KNOW YOU'RE ALIVE. YOU'D GET YOURSELF KILLED.
WE'RE ALREADY AT A DISADVANTAGE. SO ANY LOSS IN OUR FORCES...
SATSUKI.....
BE GRATEFUL I'VE EVEN ALLOWED YOU TO SPEAK FOR THIS LONG.
LET YOUR CURSE TAKE YOU, PITIFUL AND ALONE.
CRAWL AWAY AND DIE, HALF-BLOOD!
IT'S TRUE... IF HE SEES ME, HE'LL KILL ME!

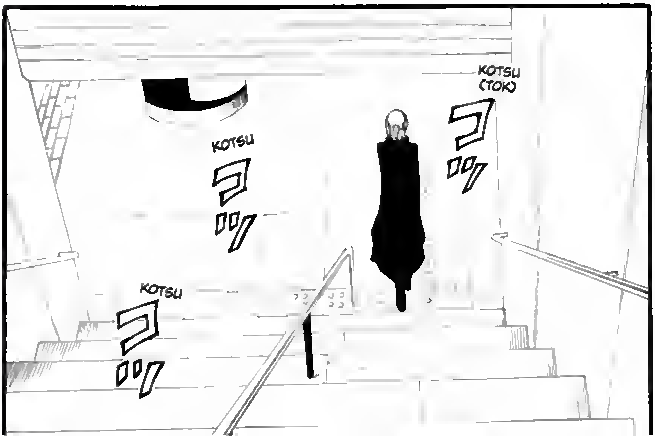

HEY!
ZOWAWAWA (SHUDDER)
LOOK ...I'M GETTING GOOSE-BUMPS!
YOU'RE A LOUSE, SO QUIT ACTING LIKE YOU CARE. IT'S JUST CREEPY...

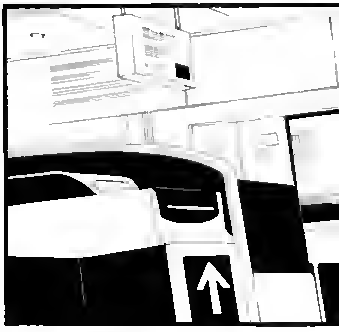
EW.

AH!
SHUBA (DASH)
I'M TAKING THE SUBWAY HOME. ADIOS!
NO, STOP IT! I DON'T WANNA BECOME A GOOSE!

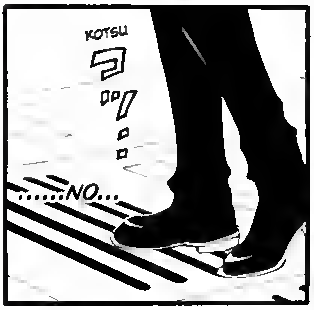
STUB-BORN BASTARD.
I DO CARE ABOUT YOU.
... GEEZ.

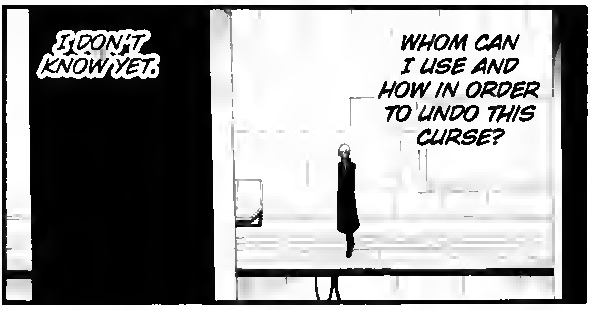
HYUUU (WHOOSH)
.....
WHY, YOU


KOTSU
KOTSU
KOTSU (TOK)

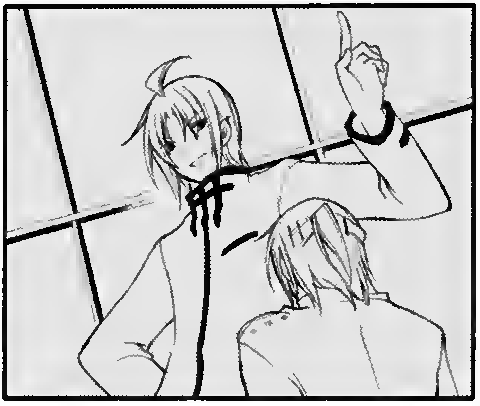


TSUZUKI, SATSUKI, ARCANA, KAMUHABURI...
KOTSU
HAAH...
THE CRUSADE...


KOTSU
.....NO...

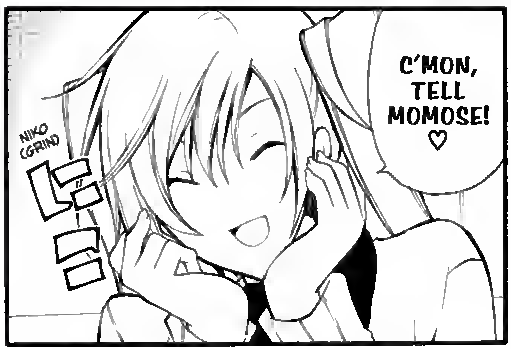

I DON'T KNOW YET.
WHOM CAN I USE AND HOW IN ORDER TO UNDO THIS CURSE?

TSUZUKI, I'LL THROW IN MY LOT WITH YOU.
I WILL TRUST YOU AND HELP YOU...!
GU (GRIT)



...AND YOU'LL BE THE ONE TO UNDO MY CURSE...!

THAT'S A SERIOUS FACE. WHAT'RE YOU THINKING?

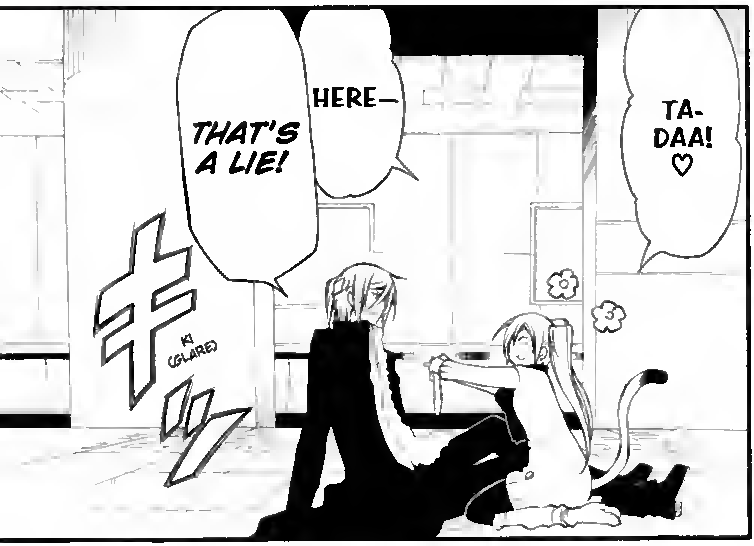

NIKO
C'MON, TELL MOMOSE! ♡

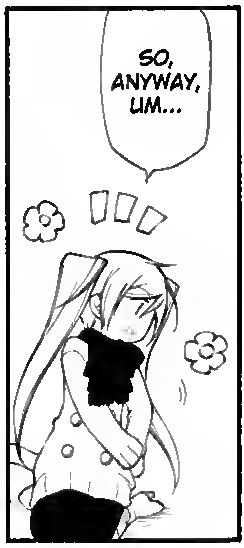
...
SATSUKI'S ...!!
.....!

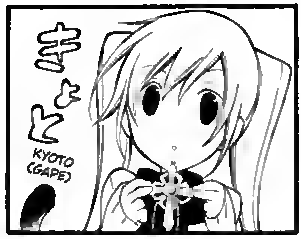
WAIT! DON'T RUN AWAY!
DA (DASH)
AW!
SHIT...!!
BA (GRAB)
IT'S SUPER RUDE TO RUN FROM MOMOSE!
LET GO!
YOU'RE SATSUKI'S CAT...! YOU'RE HERE TO KILL ME, RIGHT!?
NO, NO, I'M NOT!
EEK!
DOTE (THUMP)
GEEZ! MOMOSE WOULDN'T DO THAT!
SATSUKI SAYS HE'S NOT MAD AT YOU ANYMORE!

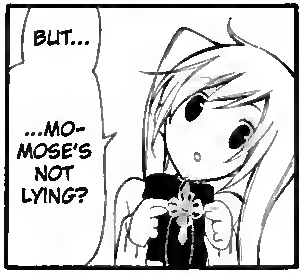
...WHAT, NOW...?
...CAME TO RELAY A MESSAGE FROM SATSUKI!
SEE, MOMOSE ...
POOR, POOR NAO.
(PAT) TO
HE THOUGHT YOUR MIXED-RACE CURSE MIGHT BE CAUSING YOU A LOT OF SUFFER-ING.
...SA-TSUKI'S WOR-RIED ABOUT YOU.
YOU KNOW ...
SHUN (DROOP)
SATSUKI WILL USE DIVINE POWER TO UNDO YOUR CURSE!
YOU CAN COUNT ON SATSUKI!
BUT!

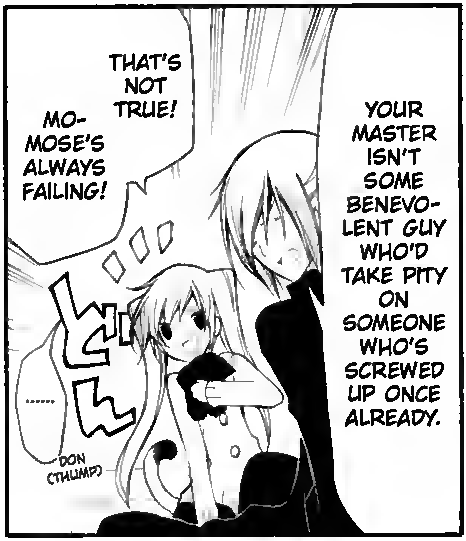
SUU (CHWOO)

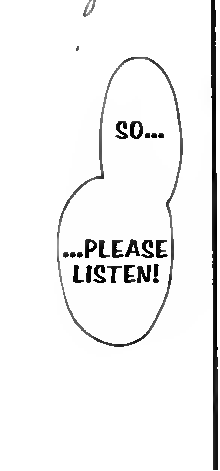

HERE—
THAT'S A LIE!
TA-DAA! ♡
KI (GLARE)


SO, ANYWAY, UM...


KYOTO (GAPE)


BUT...
...MO-MOSE'S NOT LYING?

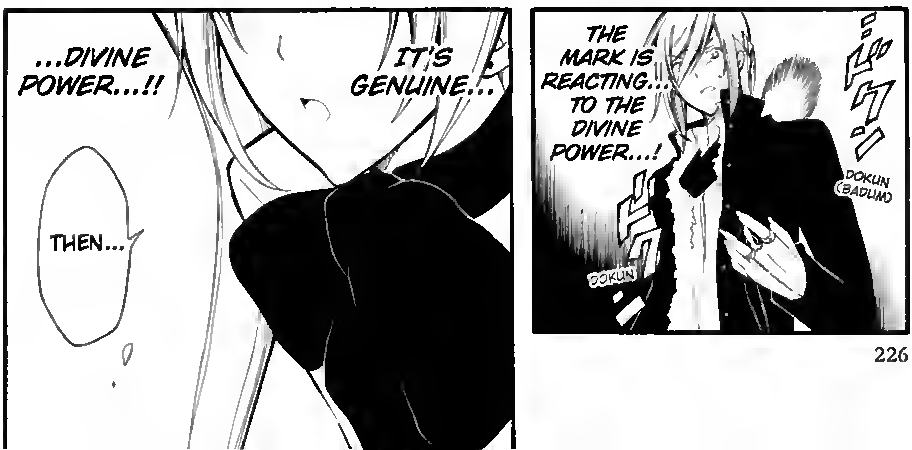

THAT'S NOT TRUE!
MO-MOSE'S ALWAYS FAILING!
YOUR MASTER ISN'T SOME BENEVO-LENT GUY WHO'D TAKE PITY ON SOMEONE WHO'S SCREWED UP ONCE ALREADY.
.....
DON (THUMP)


SO...
...PLEASE LISTEN!

SEE THE GEM IN THE CENTER OF THIS CROSS?
IF YOU PRESS IT DURING THE NEXT CRUSADE ...
CHARI (JANGLE)
...SATSUKI SAYS HE'LL GRANT YOUR WISH IN RETURN.
.....
...THAT'S ALL?
JUST PRESS IT LIKE THIS.
SUPER-EASY, RIGHT?
KACHI (CLICK)
KACHI
.....NO.
SORRY, BUT I'M NOT TEAMING UP WITH YOU.
KATSU (TAK)
I'VE LEARNED THE HARD WAY THAT HE'LL JUST KILL ME RIGHT AFTER HE USES ME!
I BET PRESSING THAT WILL RELEASE SOME TOXIC GAS OR MAKE IT EXPLODE OR PUT YET ANOTHER CURSE ON ME...
MMH ...
I'M TELLING YOU, IT WON'T DO ANY OF THAT!

...I DON'T INTEND TO BETRAY TSUZUKI AGAIN...!
BESIDES...
KATSU (TAK)
KATSU
YOU'RE DEALING WITH A FALLEN ANGEL... THERE'S NO WAY HE'D MAKE AN OFFER WITHOUT ANY STRINGS ATTACHED.
DON'T LISTEN TO HER...
BUT IT REALLY IS SAFE...
...AND IT WOULDN'T BE OBVIOUS TO ANYONE THAT YOU HAD PRESSED IT.
YOU WOULDN'T BE IN ANY DANGER...
SO...
...IT WON'T LOOK LIKE... YOU BETRAYED YOUR CURRENT ALLIANCE...
IT'S COMPLETELY SAFE.
YOU CAN KEEP STAYING WITH TSUZUKI AND HIS GROUP IF YOU WANT...
...PLUS YOUR CURSE WILL BE GONE.
OH, AND HERE'S ...
...ONE MORE PRESENT FROM SATSUKI.
SU (SSK)

.....!
ARCANA ERASED 20 PERCENT OF THE REMAINING CURSE, RIGHT? SO THERE'S... 80 PERCENT LEFT.
AND THIS RING HOLDS POWER TO CLEAR UP 30 PERCENT MORE!
KIIII (VWEEN)
...CONTAINS DIVINE POWER EXTRACTED FROM THE BOOK OF DA'AT.
THIS RING...
TOTE (TROT)
HERE, CROSS AND RING
TOTE
...
YOU CAN USE IT HOW-EVER YOU WISH.
IT'S A PRES-ENT FOR YOU, NAO.

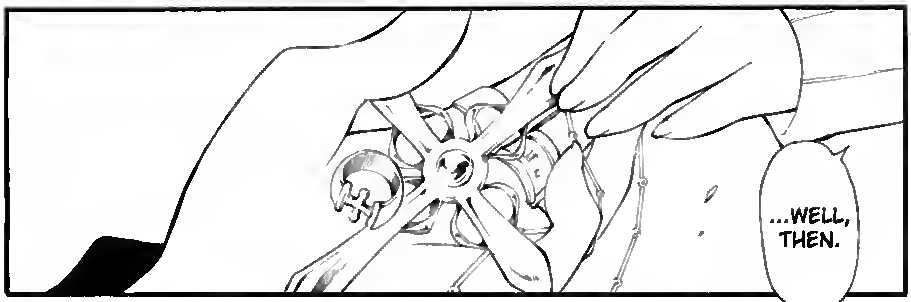

...DIVINE POWER...!!
IT'S GENUINE...
THEN...
THE MARK IS REACTING... TO THE DIVINE POWER...!
DOKUN (BADUM)
DOKUN

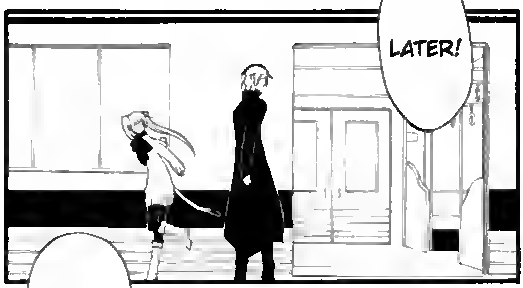
キュッ
KYU (PRESS)
...IF YOU PRESS THIS CROSS'S GEM FOR SATSUKI LIKE YOU'RE TOLD...
...HE'LL UNDO THE LAST 50 PERCENT.

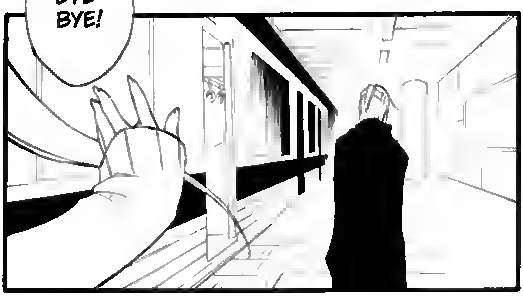
AND YOUR MIXED-RACE CURSE...
...WILL BE COMPLETELY ERADICATED.

SEE?
ISN'T SATSUKI KIND?
GATAN
GATAN (GAKLACK)
PUSH! (PSHH!)

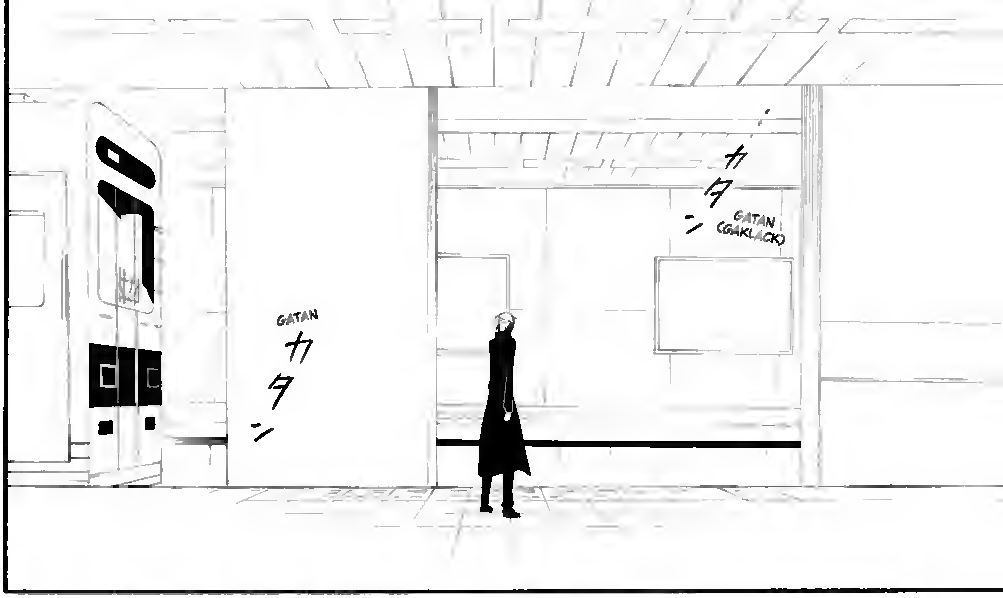
I'LL LET YOU KNOW LATER...
...WHEN TO PUSH IT, 'KAY?

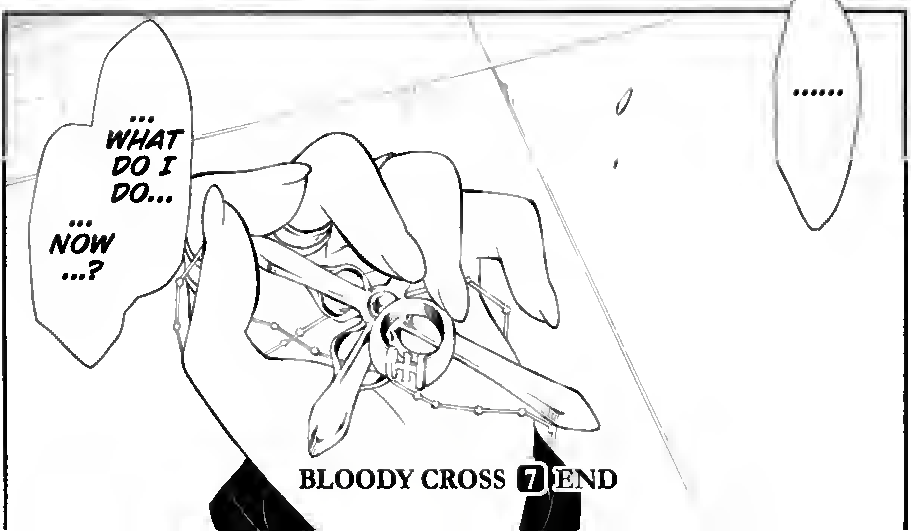

...WELL, THEN.


LATER!

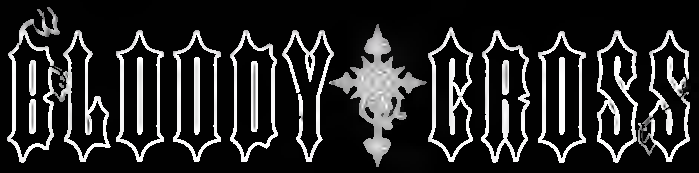

BYE-BYE!

PIIII (PHEEE)

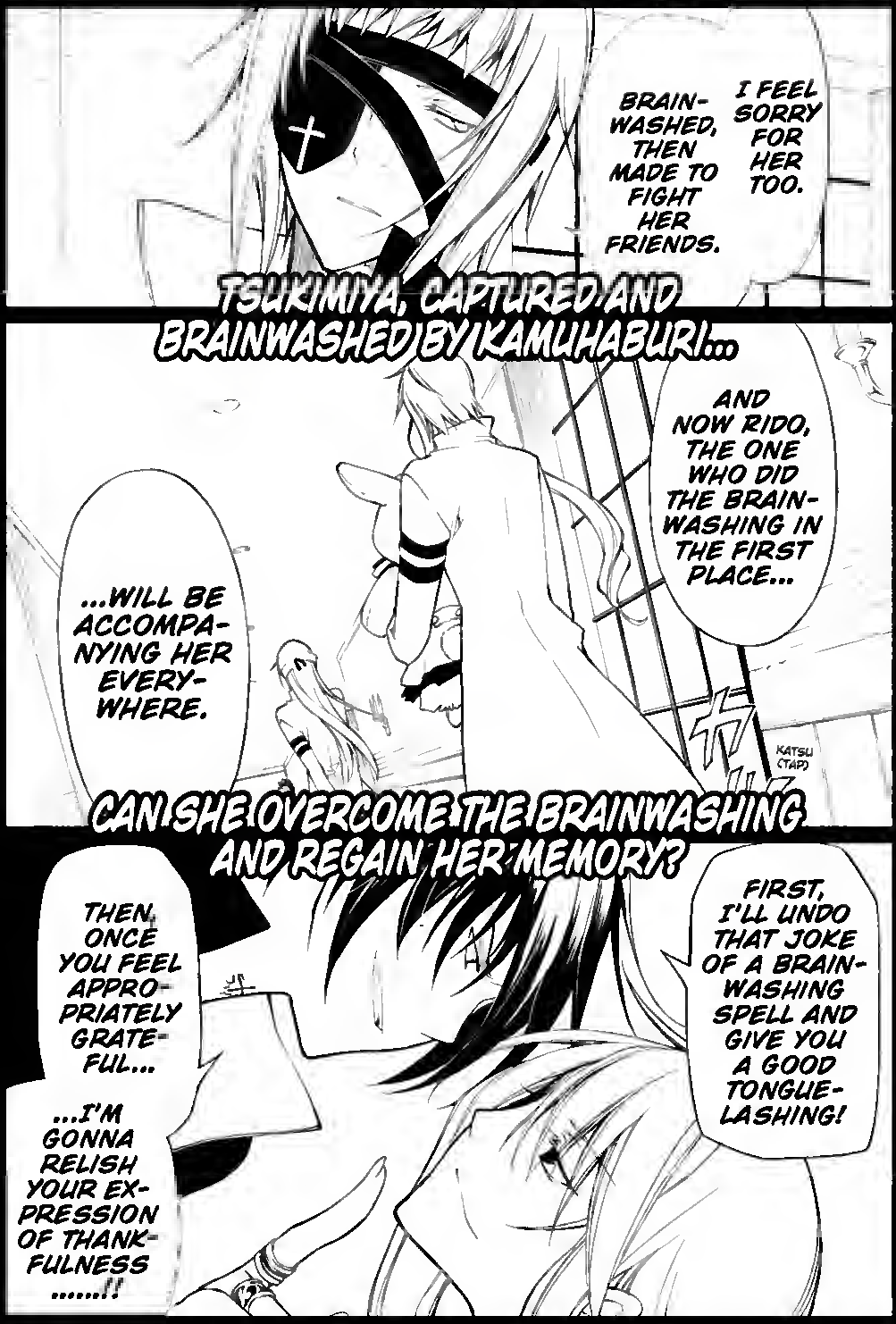




BLOODY CROSS 7 END


BLOODY CROSS

MAYBE...
...I'LL JUST GIVE IT A LITTLE TRY.....
GOKU (GULP)
...M-
ANXIOUS AS WORSENING FITS HERALD HIS IMPENDING DEMISE...
AH! THERE HE IS!
WAAAH!!
YOU SCARED ME!!!
BAAAN (SLAM)
...NAO SEEKS TO UNDO HIS CURSE QUICKLY AND ENSURE HIS SURVIVAL.
...HEY, DID YOU JUST POCKET SOMETHING?
N... NO, OF COURSE NOT.


I FEEL SORRY FOR HER TOO.
BRAIN-WASHED, THEN MADE TO FIGHT HER FRIENDS.
TSUKIMIYA, CAPTURED AND BRAINWASHED BY KAMUHABURI...
AND NOW RIDO, THE ONE WHO DID THE BRAIN-WASHING IN THE FIRST PLACE...
...WILL BE ACCOMPA-NYING HER EVERY-WHERE.
KATSU (TAP)
CAN SHE OVERCOME THE BRAINWASHING AND REGAIN HER MEMORY?
FIRST, I'LL UNDO THAT JOKE OF A BRAIN-WASHING SPELL AND GIVE YOU A GOOD TONGUE-LASHING!
THEN, ONCE YOU FEEL APPRO-PRIATELY GRATE-FUL...
...I'M GONNA RELISH YOUR EX-PRESSION OF THANK-FULNESS .....!!

YOU'D BEST NOT GET IN THE WAY OR INTER-FERE...
...KAMU-HA-BURI.
STRIVING TO MANIPULATE EVEN THE CRUSADE AT WILL...
EITHER WAY, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF LOSING TO SATSUKI.
I DON'T BUY IT.
...SATSUKI SETS A FATAL TRAP FOR TSUZUKI AT THE PLACE WHERE THE RELICS ARE TO APPEAR!!
I HAVE A THRILLING PROPOSI-TION...

To be Continued in BLOODY CROSS Vol. 8!!

AFTERWORD SCRIBBLES
Congrats! Congrats! Hinata has become the new main character of Bloody Cross! Congrats!
GAN (SHOCK)
HUH!? WAI...! I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT THAT!
AH, THANK YOU, THANK YOU.
THIS IS MY FOURTH COVER APPEARANCE!
KYAA!
HINATA!
KYAN
HINATA!
HINATA!
YAY!
LEAD ROLE!
PON (PAT)
I WON'T ACKNOWL-EDGE ANY SWITCH—
TH... THE LEAD ROLE IS MINE!
HEY!
AH HA HA HA!!
OR RATHER, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A "BOOB" ROLE!
YOU'RE NOT A LEAD ANYMORE, TSUKIMIYA! YOU'RE JUST HERE 'COS OF YOUR BOOBS!!
BISHI (JAB)
NOOOO!!
DOYO (GLOOM)
どよ...
WELCOME... TO THE APPEAR-ANCE-COUNTERS CLUB...
THEN, A LEAD ROLE COMPETITION WAR WILL BREAK OUT, AND MOE—ER, THAT IS, MO! SHALL HAPPILY TAKE ON MORE FACE TIME.
...AND HUMBLY ACCEPT THE ROLE OF "BUSTY FEMALE CHARAC-TER."
HEE-HEE... WELL, I'D SAY YOU OUGHT TO GRACEFULLY GIVE UP...
MOE
MOE
MOE
MOE
MOE
ALL RIGHT, LET ME CONSULT THE SPIRITS.
MY, MY... YOU POOR THING
READINGS 10¢ EACH
MAMA MOE
SHE RAILS IT!
A MOE A DAY
...THAT WAS MY DREAM.
SFX: GATA (SHUDDER) GATA GATA
YES!?
AH! I HAVE AN ANSWER! IT IS...
MOE
MOE, MOE-MOE. MOE MOOORE!

LIFE'S SO TOUGH...
SNIFF, SNIFF...
ゴス
GOSU (WLUMP)
MOE
UNH!? HINA-TA!?
AH! THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU!
ガチャ
GACHA (KACHAK)
HUH...?
...I THOUGHT I'D CHEER YOU UP WITH A GIFT.
WELL... I HEARD YOU WERE FEELING A LITTLE DOWN, SO...
WHAT DO YOU WANT!?
PLEASE LOOK FORWARD TO AN INCREASE IN TSUKIMIYA'S FACE TIME.
DON (SHOVE)
DIE.
ビ
BEAUTIFUL BREASTS CARE SET
NOW YOU CAN START PLAYING THE "BIG BOOBS" ROLE TOO!
WHOA! NICE RACK!
BA-BOING!
BOING
HERE.

BLOODY CROSS 7

Shiwo Komeyama

Translation: Mari Morimoto • Lettering: Xian Michele Lee

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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